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The Nation.

May 8, 1982 $1.25

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RIAL

IAN IS OUT, A. AND F.B.I. VIE TO SPY

Not since Roger Baldwin's memorial service have we heard so many civil libertarian accolades heaped on one citizen as drenched Admiral Bobby Inman when he quit the Central Intelligence Agency over "policy differences" last week.

It is, we suppose, retrospectively reassuring to be told that the former head of the National Security Agency (whose mission is to electronically eavesdrop on and otherwise invade the privacy of our enemies) is a closet civil libertarian, even as it is dispiriting to hear how little confidence so many senators have in Inman's boss, C.I.A. chief William Casey. Forgive us, then, our skepticism at the (leaked) reasons for his departure.

Inman bailed out, we are told, because he disagreed with a never-adopted proposal drafted by the National Security Council staff to "reorganize" U.S. counterintelligence activities by creating a central agency that would take over management of the responsibilities now in the hands of the C.I.A. and the F.B.I.

If the proposal was indeed turned down, why did he resign? And given the disinformation apparently endemic to all intelligence operations, why would the agency have leaked that the reorganization had been disapproved unless it had been approved?

Too convoluted? Perhaps. After all, the fight is not one of principle but one of jurisdiction—not whether, but rather which one of our intelligence agencies will have the privilege of spying on Americans. Maybe when General Haig is finished with the Falklands he can do some mediating closer to home. Eavesdropping on Americans is, after all, an area in which he has some expertise.

PENTAGON WHISTLE-BLAST
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A MOVEMENT WITHOUT MERCY

THE JEWS OF THE NEW RIGHT

EARL SHORRIS

As each new challenge to the ethical existence of Jews arises, a chorus of Jewish voices answers. The current challenge comes from within the ranks of Jews. A group of men and women, claiming to be both Jews and neoconservatives, now proposes that Jews accept a new ethical definition of themselves, a definition contrary to much, perhaps most, of what has defined us since our historical beginning in the desert after we were sojourners in Egypt.

The neoconservative Jews are best identified by the half-dozen middle-aged former leftists who led the garrulous conversion. Norman Podhoretz, the first to announce that power is an antidote to vulgarity, writes the doctrine best, clearly and in a style that seems less and less that of a man who learned English late in life. Daniel Bell flirts with neoconservatism; much of it pleases him, but he cannot bring himself to abandon his commitment to mercy. Irving Kristol, the first to accept the neoconservative label, has become the jackal of the movement, the last man to support the war in Vietnam and the first Jew to defend the military governors of Argentina against charges of anti-Semitism. Nathan Glazer, the chief neoconservative theoretician in the fight against affirmative action programs, led in the argument that what is good for the blacks is no longer good for the Jews. Midge Decter Podhoretz writes the cruelest prose in defense of the family, attacking the counterculture, the women's movement and homosexuals. Sidney Hook thought he saw Stalin among the raucous, fearful child rebels of the 1960s who called themselves revolutionaries while taking comfort in the knowledge that the revolution would not come and the monthly

(*Continued on Page 557*)

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LETTERS.

HATCH EMENDS

New York City

In his essay on Costa-Gavras's *Missing* ["'Missing': Cultural Battlefield," *The Nation*, April 17], Andrew Kopkind places me in the "ranks of the culture warriors on the right [as opposed to the left] side of the fight." By that he means that my review of the film reflected the views of those who would deny, or seek to justify, the long history of our government's wicked incursions into the affairs of other nations.

When he quotes me, Kopkind runs together fragments of different sentences, thus distorting what I said. But I will not quarrel with his misquotation, nor do I feel any need to defend myself against the charge of right-wing affiliation. I do want to make sure that my position on *Missing* is clear.

My problem with the film is that it mixes fact with supposition. The fact is that our representatives in Chile conspired with rightists there to overthrow President Allende; the supposition is that our embassy connived in the murder of Charles Horman. Kopkind says that the director has evidence aplenty to support this unmistakable allegation, but Flora Lewis of *The New York Times* says that, when she pressed him on his facts, Costa-Gavras replied that he was an artist, not a journalist; that for the overall truth he was not dependent on facts. That, as I said, put him "on slippery ground," meaning that it weakened the force of his larger accusation. Kopkind's article contains a passage that I think supports my judgment. He reports that, after seeing the movie, Cord Meyer (a former Central Intelligence agent) found it "incredible that we sit here celebrating a movie that implies American diplomats agreed to this young man's death." I don't know what part, if any, the diplomats played in this crime, but I wish Costa-Gavras had not made a grave charge that he was not prepared to support with proof. It gives the likes of Cord Meyer a chance to divert attention from thoroughly documented U.S. villainies in Chile and elsewhere.

Robert Hatch

CHAIKIN COUNTERS

New York City

"The Great Japan Debate" [Thomas Ferguson and Joel Rogers, *The Nation*, Feb. 13] contained several misrepresentations so erroneous that I am compelled to comment on them.

In their discussion of the American labor movement's response to excessive levels of imports from Japan, Ferguson and Rogers inferred that some union leaders have been co-opted and consequently have failed to represent the interests of workers who have suffered import-related unemployment. In support of this assertion, I was singled out as an important labor leader who is "part of the multinationally-dominated U.S.-Japan network."

It was suggested that I had acquiesced on the issue of excessive import penetration because of my involvement with the Trilateral Commission and the U.S.-Japan Foundation, or because of my alleged "hopes of being named U.S. ambassador to Japan upon the re-election of Jimmy Carter." Even for uninformed observers, such assertions demonstrate an unusual degree of ignorance and naïveté. From Ferguson and Rogers, purported political experts and professional journalists, such reporting represents an unconscionable disregard for accuracy.

During the 1980 Presidential campaign, there were unsubstantiated rumors that I might be named Secretary of Labor in a second Carter Administration. At the time, I refuted such rumors at every opportunity because, very simply, they were completely untrue. For the record, my only ambition since starting as a union organizer in 1940 has been to serve the members of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and, by extension, the interests of all working Americans. Regrettably, Ferguson and Rogers chose to omit any reference to my repeated, unequivocal statements regarding my disinterest in serving in government. Nor did they make any effort to permit me an opportunity to confirm or deny the rumor which was incorporated into their article.

The authors also suggest that my involvement with the Trilateral Commission and the U.S.-Japan Foundation constrains my opposition to the continuation of so-called "free trade." Their apparent presumption is that such organizations are monolithic and that all members agree on trade policy. Otherwise, Ferguson and Rogers would perhaps be more reluctant to pronounce guilt by association.

It is true that I am a member of the Trilateral Commission, the advisory board of the U.S.-Japan Foundation and several other organizations concerned with international affairs. Such involvement provides direct access to both public- and private-sector policy makers. Consequently, I have been afforded an opportunity to assess the arguments made on behalf of unrestricted imports as well as a forum from which to press for the implementation of a rational system of fair trade that would alleviate much of our current import-related economic distress.

The authors did not even need to consult me to confirm my staunch opposition to our present trade policy with respect to Japan and the many developing nations that seek to expand their exports to the United States. I have spoken extensively on this issue; my views have been expressed in numerous newspaper and magazine articles; I have appeared on national broadcasts and have published a volume of speeches and essays that deals largely with the problems caused by excessive import penetration.

In the more than twenty years that the members of the I.L.G.W.U. have been confronted with import-related unemployment, we have learned a few valuable lessons. One is that it is insufficient to merely "preach to the faithful." Only the politically naïve disdain the opportunity to assess and to educate the opposition. Ferguson and Rogers's students and readers would be better served by a fuller appreciation of this integral fact of political life.

I trust that the necessary steps will be taken to correct the inaccuracies and fabrications that have unfortunately found their way into *The Nation*. I must hasten to add, however, that under the circumstances, a mere reprinting of this letter is an insufficient remedy because corrections of misstatements rarely, if ever, catch up with the damage done.

Sol C. Chaikin
President, I.L.G.W.U.

REPLY

Despite his assertion of "inaccuracies and fabrications," Sol Chaikin fails to point to a single error of fact in "The Great Japan Debate." We stand by the article as written.

—The Editors

CORRECTION

The name of the president of England's National Viewers' and Listeners' Association was given incorrectly in Richard Gilman's theater column in the April 17 issue. She is Mary Whitehouse.

NATION AWARDS

The Nation has won a Page One Award for Crusading Journalism for its publication of James Petras's investigative report, "Invented Red Menace: White Paper on the White Paper" (March 28, 1981). Judges for the Newspaper Guild of New York, the sponsors of the award, commended Petras "for a courageous article, seriously questioning the Administration's justification for deeper involvement in El Salvador through the use of a specious rendering of information."

Calvin Trillin won a Page One Award in the "Feature (Essay) Writing" category for two of his "Variations" columns (since renamed "Uncivil Liberties").

Finally, Victor S. Navasky has won an American Book Award in the "General Non-Fiction" category for the Penguin Books paperback edition of *Naming Names*.

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EDITORIALS.

Private Diplomacy

The Falkland Islands confrontation is tempestuous for sure. Beyond the icy, blowing weather near the Horn, there's the surging rhetoric of North versus South and East versus West. Our man of mediation, General Haig, speaks of "the greatest of tragedies" if there is fighting (greater than a holocaust?). The Russians warn of "great danger. . . to those who provoke" it, not to mention danger to the 15 million tons of grain they get from the "anti-Communist" pampas.

All this big talk is about 1,800 colonists (hardly colonial) isolated but not insulated on a geopolitical accident, neither here nor there. The reason to take what appears to be an Evelyn Waugh comedy seriously—aside from the fact that innocent lives may be lost—is that out of some such absurd circumstance one day might come The Real Thing.

And, of course, the confrontation involves a principle: we postwar, prewar moderns just don't take territory by "aggression." Instead, the modern, civilized way is to do it by indirection, using surrogates backed by force. Hence the U.S.S.R.'s successes in Eastern Europe in the late 1940s and, in a sense, the United States' failures in Indochina. The actual wars, armies versus armies, in Korea and the Middle East seem like accidents. It can't happen here, or now.

But it is happening, freakishly, down there in the South Atlantic after 149 years of stalemate; and whether or not the mediation of the United States flops (as it appears to be doing), we should begin now, learning what not to do next time.

President Reagan tried the even-handed approach from

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the start. He said we were "friends" of both parties to the conflict, though nations, famously, should have no friends, only interests. He said this country had "perhaps a unique ability to mediate here," a proposition disproved by Haig's 32,965 miles of shuttling in twelve days.

What was unique was only the tilt toward Argentina and away from Britain, our most faithful ally, servilely so under the Thatcher government. The reason for that skew was the dependence of Reagan and Haig on the anti-Communist militance of the murderous dictatorship in Buenos Aires. Their plan was to use some of these Argentine blackguards to help put down the insurgencies in Central America.

If ever there was a case for public diplomacy, with cards on the table, this was it, but that is not what we have been getting from our diplomatic general. Indeed, Haig has tried to surpass Kissinger in secrecy and oracular statements, having outdistanced him in shuttling mileage. If he had dared to reveal what the two governments were saying, the world would have seen the regime-saving absurdity of the Argentine position and the desire of the British to shuck this remote burden with a semblance of what is called honor.

Open diplomacy might have worked better than the kind Haig has been practicing, and Americans would have learned something about the inducements this country was offering Argentina to cease and desist. What has Haig been dangling—more weapons for these killers? a share in our "intelligence" operations? trade advantages?

The best outcome, beyond a peaceful solution to a small but significant armed confrontation, would be to have the Argentine dictators become so angry at the United States that they reject Washington's offer to join us as jack-booted cops enforcing reaction in Central America. That would be a real contribution by the 1,800 Falkland Islanders to hemispheric harmony.

Braking Rights

In an attempt to reverse a quarter century of civil rights progress, the Reagan Administration has targeted not only the Justice Department but also the Equal Employment Opportunity and Civil Rights Commissions. Each of these agencies is a longtime bête noire of the business community to whom this Administration seems to owe its primary allegiance and of the racists it persistently encourages. The method is simple: appoint administrators who are either actively hostile to the laws they are supposed to enforce or defiantly ignorant of them.

In January, for example, Michael Connolly, the E.E.O.C.'s new general counsel, told his staff that he would not press sexual harassment suits filed by employees against their fellow workers, that he would discourage age-discrimination suits involving "severe hardship to the employer," that he would file few class-action suits, and that he would not file suits seeking equal pay for comparable work. All of these actions are sanctioned by current law. "There was an election in November," Connolly reportedly told his staff, "and things are going to change around here." J. Clay Smith Jr., then acting chairman of the commission, reprimanded Connolly for exceeding his authority, and Connolly backed down.

But perhaps only temporarily. A few weeks ago Connolly abruptly transferred nine of the E.E.O.C.'s senior lawyers, including six blacks. The move shocked the commission staff and will most likely prompt a number of resignations, enabling Connolly to appoint people who think the way he does. Future appointees to the E.E.O.C. are likely to go along with Connolly's views. Reagan withdrew the nomination of William Bell, his first choice for chairman of the commission, because of public criticism that he was unqualified (he ran a minority employment agency that hadn't found jobs for any minorities in the preceding year). We can be little more encouraged by the current nominee, Clarence Thomas, head of the Office of Civil Rights at the Department of Education. Thomas is reportedly hostile to many E.E.O.C. policies, and a district court judge has suggested that he may be cited for contempt for "major violations" of a court decree because he refused to enforce court-ordered deadlines in school segregation cases being handled by his office. So it's probably just a matter of time before the E.E.O.C. once again becomes the ineffectual agency it was before Eleanor Holmes Norton took over in 1977. This time, however, it will be ineffectual by design, not because it couldn't help itself.

The Civil Rights Commission has been a particular thorn in the sides of Senators Jesse Helms, Orrin Hatch, Strom Thurmond and their friends. The commission was established during the Eisenhower Administration as a fact-gathering body that would also serve as the nation's conscience in civil rights matters, and Presidents of both parties have usually appointed distinguished citizens to it. To preserve their independence, commissioners have traditionally been allowed to serve out their terms. That tradition has been broken. Last year, after Senator Howard Metzenbaum thwarted the efforts of Hatch and Thurmond to kill the commission by budgetary starvation, Reagan fired three commissioners in order to replace them with his own people. And what people! One nominee, B. Sam Hart, is a black evangelist with tax and money troubles. Hart opposes the Equal Rights Amendment, equal rights for homosexuals and school busing. He also hasn't voted in the last twenty years. Public outrage forced him to withdraw, though he attributed his downfall to communist and homosexual "infiltration" of the media and "the highest areas in government circles." (*Reagan* "government circles"?) The new chairman, Clarence Pendleton, was described in a *New York Times* editorial as someone whose "main qualification seems to be that, like Mr. Reagan, he disapproves of government-induced affirmative action and school busing to remove the effects of official segregation."

Actions and appointments like these demean an agency, demoralize its staff and destroy its effectiveness. They are a form of administrative impoundment, designed to bypass Congress and the courts and repeal or rewrite the law. But that's the way this Administration has generally operated whenever its ideology has conflicted with the rule of law.

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Dissenting Opinion

As we went to press, Susan Sontag had not dropped her claim against the defunct Soho News *for excerpting her Town Hall speech, and Harper & Row and the* Reader's Digest *had not dropped their claim against* The Nation *for running a story about Gerald Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon prior to the publication of Ford's own memoirs. Our position persists that the free speech clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution precludes both suits (although in* The Nation*'s case, as our lawyers are careful to point out, the court needn't reach that issue since we also believe that what we published was within the letter and spirit of the fair-use doctrine of the copyright law). For another view, herewith Aryeh Neier.* —*The Editors*

Though some have responded to Susan Sontag's recent Town Hall speech by engaging her arguments seriously, others have chosen to indict her by innuendo or attack her laterally for matters quite extraneous to her remarks. The most regular, and unfortunate, forays are being launched in *The Village Voice*, particularly by two of that paper's columnists, Alexander Cockburn and Nat Hentoff.

The focus of the Hentoff and Cockburn attacks has been Sontag's copyright lawsuit against the now-defunct *Soho News* for publishing her essay against her wishes and in a format which seemed designed to convey the impression that she had submitted it as an article. Sontag is accused of violating freedom of the press by seeking to control where her essay about freedom may be published.

Cockburn's attacks can be readily dismissed, since his willingness to champion freedom of the press is selective—it does not extend, for example, to *La Prensa* and *El Pueblo* in Nicaragua. He makes it plain that he doesn't like what Sontag said, and he uses her lawsuit simply as a pretext to snipe at her. Hentoff must be taken more seriously, however, since he is a consistent and passionate advocate of freedom of the press, even though his analytic abilities are not always comparably admirable.

In the April 13 *Village Voice*, Hentoff argues that Susan Sontag's lawsuit to control publication of an essay written *by* Sontag is in the same category as Jane Fonda's attempt to suppress a book written *about* Fonda. Indeed, Sontag is the greater sinner in Hentoff's eyes because she has filed suit while Fonda has only threatened to bring suit.

Hentoff makes two main arguments. The first is that Sontag uttered publicly what she wrote. The second is that what she said was newsworthy. It follows, in Hentoff's view, that Sontag lost all right to control publication.

Let us consider first the question of public utterance. If Hentoff is right on this, the practice of delivering lectures that are subsequently published as articles or collected in books would come to a halt. Anyone who wants to publish and obtain the benefits of publication would avoid lecturing, or giving poetry readings. What about theater? The mind fairly reels.

The question of newsworthiness is easier to consider once it is acknowledged that public utterance is not the issue. Suppose Sontag had not spoken the words of her essay at Town Hall but had simply published them in *The Nation*. Would the *Soho News* have been free to reprint the essay even though it was copyrighted and permission was refused? Of course not. The *Soho News* would have had a right to publish an article about Sontag or about her essay. All of the ideas in the essay could have been discussed and excerpts from it could have been used. But the entire essay could not have been published if permission was refused.

In an earlier article on the same subject, Hentoff deals with the propriety of copyrighting by stating, "I am not going to argue copyright law here." At the same time, he conveys the impression that the practice is somehow inimical to the First Amendment. Even *The Nation* has argued in an editorial [see "On Being Sued," March 8, 1980] that "there is a natural tension between the copyright act, which protects property, and the First Amendment, which protects speech." I don't think the authors of the Constitution saw it that way. They explicitly provided that one of the powers of Congress is "to promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries." Indeed, until the Bill of Rights was added, this was the only use of the word "right" in the Constitution, a mark of its significance. Copyrighting promotes "useful Arts"—that is, it encourages authors to write just as the First Amendment encourages authors to write. Far from being at odds with each other, these are two complementary provisions of the Constitution.

There are circumstances, of course, where newsworthiness makes copyright claims inappropriate. A good example is the revelations that Gerald Ford made in his memoirs about his pardon of Richard Nixon. What was newsworthy was not the "useful Arts" of expression practiced by writers like Sontag but the disclosure of official acts by the United States government. The Harper & Row and *Reader's Digest* lawsuit against *The Nation* for publishing an article about Ford's disclosures misuses copyright, converting it into an instrument to suppress information about governmental acts until a government official can personally profit from its disclosure. Sontag's lawsuit against the *Soho News*, by contrast, is an entirely proper use of copyright, encouraging writers to utter publicly what they write and to control where their work may be published.

Lumping Sontag's essay with Ford's disclosures under the common heading of newsworthiness is saying to writers that if they succeed in being sufficiently interesting and provocative in their writing, they must forego the benefits of controlling publication.

As it happens, I regret that Sontag filed suit against the *Soho News* and told her so as soon as I learned of it. I have two reasons for opposing it: a fear that a court might hand down a more sweeping decision than is warranted by the circumstances (a point also made by Hentoff), and a belief that nothing she can get from the suit is worth the attacks she incurs for bringing it. It would be best, in my view, if the suit

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were withdrawn. If it is pursued, I hope Sontag wins—but with a narrow opinion confined to the facts of the case.

Sontag is not entitled to escape criticism either for the content of her speech or for bringing a lawsuit against the *Soho News*. But she does not deserve the mean-spiritedness and prosecutorial fervor of some of the attacks upon her.

ARYEH NEIER

Aryeh Neier is vice chairman of the Americas Watch and Helsinki Watch committees.

The Biggest Whistle-Blowing of Them All

Washington, April 28

Back in January, with too little public attention, somebody at the Pentagon blew the whistle on the Reagan defense budget. In terms of money, it was by far the biggest whistle-blowing ever. On January 8, a veteran of the Pentagon press corps, George C. Wilson, reported in *The Washington Post* the explosion of a fiscal bombshell at a closed meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff the day before.

Wilson wrote that Richard D. DeLauer, the head of weapons research and procurement at the Defense Department, told the Joint Chiefs that the Reagan five-year arms program might end up costing as much as 50 percent more than the figures sent to Congress.

This would be no minor gap. The Reagan five-year projection for fiscal 1984 through 1988 called for expenditures of $1.5 trillion in 1983 dollars. DeLauer advised tightening up on the program because that amount was insufficient. The "best guess," he said, was a shortfall of $300 billion, but the gap could be as large as $750 billion.

To make these dizzy figures conceivable, let us borrow one of Reagan's favorite rhetorical devices. If the Pentagon had started spending a million dollars a day on the day the Prince of Peace was born, it would by now have spent less than half of that five-year $1.5 trillion projection. And that's still not enough?

All those White House mutterings you have been hearing about the dangerous disclosure of national security secrets go back to that leak. Everybody at that secret briefing was later subjected to a lie-detector test in a frantic self-investigation. The august Joint Chiefs—praise God!—were cleared. But the ax has fallen on a former career officer, John C. F. Tillson, now a civilian director of manpower management at the Pentagon. He is a West Pointer, twice decorated with a Silver Star in Vietnam. He denied the charges but faces dismissal.

The affair raises a wide range of public policy questions, some of them urgent. Tillson is accused of leaking not just to a reporter but to five persons on the staffs of Congressional committees. The press reports did not name the committees, but I had no trouble obtaining the names of the recipients of the leak: two are from the Senate Armed Services Committee, one from the House Armed Services Committee and one each from the Senate and House Budget Committees.

These are the very committees on whose "right to know" Congress depends for its power to control the military budget. The Pentagon doesn't dare claim a right to "classify" such information. So Tillson is accused of passing "official information," not military secrets.

Military cost overruns are hardly a secret. They are notorious, and growing. Congress has been trying for years to keep them within bounds. In 1972 the General Accounting Office reported that Defense Department weapons prices were running 40 percent over cost estimates. Now even the hawkish and right-wing Heritage Foundation (in a just released study, "Cutting the High Cost of Weapons") says that cost overruns are averaging 100 percent.

So a Pentagon spokesman at a press conference yesterday, in discussing the Tillson case, chose his words with precision. He said the captain had leaked secrets, not to an enemy but to an "adversary." Congress is certainly an adversary. The Pentagon feels about "whistle-blowers" the way the Kremlin feels about Helsinki-watchers.

The problem transcends inflation. The Pentagon violates all the favorite shibboleths of the Reagan Administration. One is reliance on the free market. The military-industrial complex, though eager to defend free enterprise abroad, evades it at home. The Heritage Foundation reports that only 8 percent of military contracts are fully competitive, while 60 percent are negotiated on a "sole source" basis.

Wilson and the five Congressional aides have denied that they learned of the new overrun forecasts from Tillson. The truth is that the Pentagon and the armed forces are full of rebels against the mindless dimensions and profligacy of the Reagan arms program.

The discontent surfaced in an extraordinary editorial in the March 1 *Army Times*. It fears "a backlash" against needed military improvements because of unrealistic military objectives. These were reflected in Secretary Weinberger's call earlier this year for extant forces big enough for "world-wide war, including concurrent reinforcement of Europe, deployment to Southwest Asia and support of other potential areas of conflict."

The *Army Times* said that "with a realistic foreign policy, in which the armed forces would be assigned only to defend the clear national interests, there would be no need to gear up for war in every jungle, desert and mountain range on the surface of the earth."

All this has immediate relevance to the current budget negotiations between Reagan and Congress. If the report of the Joint Chiefs is correct, it portends budget deficits worse than hitherto forecast. Defense overruns could add an average of from $60 billion to $150 billion to future deficits. On that basis how can fiscal sobriety ever be restored and interest rates brought down?

I. F. STONE

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DOCUMENT.

LETTER FROM A POLISH PRISON

'We Must Move To Resistance'

Jacek Kuron has been detained in Bialoleka Prison since Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski imposed martial law in Poland on December 13, 1981. Kuron, who helped found KOR (the Committee for Workers' Defense) in 1976, has been one of Lech Walesa's principal advisers since the creation of Solidarity in the aftermath of the August 1980 Gdansk shipyard strike. Kuron and his colleagues in KOR often served as a mediating bridge between the workers on the factory floor and other dissident groups representing students, civil servants and professionals. This statement by Kuron was smuggled out of his prison cell and published in Le Monde *March 13. We provide our readers an excerpted version translated from the French by Amy Wilentz, former Assistant Editor of* The Nation. *—The Editors*

JACEK KURON

Poland is living with war. Those who have proclaimed that war don't try very hard to hide the fact that they wage it against their own people. Thanks to our extraordinary discipline, we have until now avoided bloody confrontations on a grand scale. But we are living under a classic military occupation, which includes the censoring of mails, curfews, police raids, searches, arrests, military tribunals and the like. Terror, threats and desperate calls for calm are the only language the regime speaks.

What does it achieve by these means, and what can it achieve? Hatred from all, fear and submission from some, determination and the will to fight from others. The regime cannot trust the terrified: their submission will last only as long as the terror itself. And it must guard against the determined, who will fight the more resolutely, the more ferocious the repression. . . .

Violence begets violence. The least patient citizens, the least thoughtful, tend toward terror. But it is a double-edged sword. Terror engenders terror, and spiraling terror can be stopped only by terror. He who sows the wind reaps the whirlwind. . . .

The military occupation, should it continue, will inevitably lead the government to catastrophe. If there are men of understanding in this government, they will be wondering whether a move toward compromise might not make sense. The Church has announced its support for compromise, and in Poland this carries enormous authority. The Church will be supported by the majority of Solidarity's leaders, by men of science and culture; in short, by all those who matter in Poland. Even more important, a move toward compromise would provide the government with the social mandate it has lacked since 1956. Compromise is risky, but occupation is suicidal.

Massive and well-organized resistance is the only possibility now for resolving the Polish crisis. . . . Only such a movement can end the wave of terrorism. Only such a movement would lower the risk of Soviet intervention, because it would avert the inevitable social explosion that will occur if no compromise is reached. We must now rally to this movement and prove ourselves disciplined about it. We must organize a way to spread information—even though we may be blocked at the last moment—so that both the concrete objectives and the methods of the movement are made known to all.

The movement must also concentrate on demonstrations—everything from tracts and inscriptions written on the walls to more or less long-term strikes—using different forms of collective action. Demonstrations are crucial to building national morale and to putting pressure on those in the government who might eventually support a compromise. The ultimate demonstration—and our last chance to press for a compromise—would be a general strike. But we must realize that all these forms of resistance constitute a demonstration of national will to men who are dead set against the nation. If we pursue resistance while those within the government who support a compromise are silent, we will not avoid a catastrophe.

In ten weeks—maybe a little sooner, maybe a little later—a local incident somewhere will generate a riot which will ignite the country. The military government may be overthrown, but at the highest price, and with a major risk of Soviet intervention.

To avoid this, the leaders of the resistance movement must prepare the people both for the major concessions necessary for compromise and for the destruction of the military occupation by a general demonstration. I believe such a demonstration can take the form of a simultaneous offensive against all centers of power and information throughout the land. The men in power must understand that they have only a very short time left during which to undertake a compromise.

While expecting the worst, we must from now on do everything possible to make the Russians realize that, with a minimum of good will on their part, a national consensus in Poland—even should it occur without the participation of the present leaders of the country—will not threaten Russia's military interests and can only benefit its economic interests. On the other hand, an armed intervention will be the last act of the Soviet Union.

I do not guarantee that an organized, national demonstration combined with a declaration of good will toward the Russians will assure us safety from the U.S.S.R. But I do affirm that if the military occupation continues, such a demonstration will limit risks to a minimum.

For many years, I have extolled abstention from violence. But I feel obliged to speak out now in order to say that, at present, preparing ourselves to counter the occupation through collective action seems to me the lesser evil. □

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ARTICLES.

HOW THE CHAMBER LOBBIES

Giving America The Business

ROBERT K. MASSIE JR.

The fanciest television studio in Washington, D.C., does not belong to ABC, NBC or CBS but to the United States Chamber of Commerce. Located in the Chamber's headquarters, the studio is the centerpiece of the business group's most controversial new lobbying tool: the American Business Network, or Biznet. When the inaugural transmission is beamed by satellite across the nation later this year, the Chamber of Commerce will establish itself as the leader in the use of television for grass-roots lobbying and business propaganda.

Most Americans think of the Chamber of Commerce as a benign and apolitical service organization, a group of local business people who like to have lunch together and discuss ways to lure "industry" to their area. The U.S. Chamber encourages this image, though the national office in fact has an $86 million annual budget which it draws from over 200,000 member chambers, businesses and associations. The Chamber's headquarters, housing about 1,500 workers, faces the White House across Lafayette Square.

The political clout of the U.S. Chamber has always been significant, even in a town where thousands of trade associations, lobbying groups and corporate representatives are in the business of pressuring Congress. Yet because of a recent boom in membership, the development of a large-scale computerized mailing system and the election of Ronald Reagan, the Chamber has now become, along with the elite Business Roundtable, the most influential business lobby in Washington.

Not wishing to rest on this success, the Chamber has invested heavily over the past three years in an elaborate television communications system, which it hopes will make the group a decisive force in lobbying for some time to come. "We're so far out in front I don't see how anyone can catch up," says Milton Mitler, the Chamber's manager of media relations. Though most Chamber officials are modest when discussing the venture in public, they do indulge in rather inflated rhetoric when speaking to the business community. "Through Biznet the American business community is going to influence the affairs of the nation," announced Chamber president Richard Lesher last October. "We are going to influence the affairs of Congress; we are going to impact on the White House itself for the good of the nation."

Robert K. Massie Jr. is the director of the Economics and Ethics Research Center Inc., a New Haven-based corporate responsibility study group.

The costs and the potential payoff of Biznet are great. The Chamber has already spent $3.5 million to build the 5,400-square-foot television studio at its headquarters, and officials expect that operating the network will cost up to $1.5 million a year. Subscribers, drawn mostly from the organization's larger members, will each have to purchase a satellite receiving dish for $15,000 to $20,000 and pay a $5,000 annual subscription fee. All transmissions will be scrambled to prevent anyone from tapping into the satellite's signal. The Chamber has lined up sixteen customers and hopes to have 100 by December and 400 by the beginning of 1986.

For the first few months, Biznet will operate only one day a week, beaming nine hours of political and economic information over SATCOM IV. Subscribers will be able to watch Presidential adviser Edwin Meese 3d meeting with several hundred corporate lobbyists at the Chamber's biweekly "Breakfast Bunch." Or they can use a transcontinental phone hookup to interview televised guests, as a group of businessmen in California did with Representative Jack Kemp on February 19 during a trial broadcast. Other upcoming programs include "The Association Insider's Breakfast," an international forum on foreign trade and finance, and seminars on management and fund-raising techniques.

The potential power of Biznet lies not in its service programs but in its ability to influence legislation by rapidly stimulating a broad grass-roots response. In 1979, Lesher said that the Chamber's "main mission in life is to influence the United States Congress," and to do so the group has established a large and sophisticated lobbying system. Eighty-five "issue managers" follow legislation through Congress, using facts and figures provided by member companies and business-sponsored research foundations. Once the Chamber's board of directors has determined the organization's attitude toward a policy or bill, that view is promoted vigorously among its members. Supporting articles appear in the Chamber's monthly magazine, *Nation's Business*, 1.2 million copies of which are distributed to members, hotels and airlines. The issue is debated on the Chamber's weekly television program, *It's Your Business*, which is carried by 150 stations and reaches an estimated 1.5 million households; when an issue becomes newsworthy, it receives extensive coverage in the Chamber's weekly tabloid, *Washington Report* (circulation 700,880), and is promoted on the organization's own radio show. When a bill is coming up for a vote, the Chamber sends a six-to-eight page "Legislative Alert" to its members, urging them to contact their Congressional representatives. If a representative is wavering on an important bill, the Chamber turns to its closely guarded computer list of "Key Resource People," individuals sympathetic to business who have some personal link to the elected official—his golf partner, say, or college roommate, or brother-in-law.

All this has resulted in a high degree of lobbying success over the years. And Biznet will enhance this by dramatically

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reducing the response time, a decisive factor in influencing the passage of legislation. "A vote will come up, business will generate a response, and by the time the average citizen reads about it in the paper it will be all over," Ralph Nader has said. "This will have a tremendous impact. One senator told me that just recently he made a speech on the floor at 1 o'clock and got a call from his local chamber objecting to it at 4. That was done on an ad hoc basis, by telephone. With Biznet, they will be able to do that regularly."

Biznet will be used to boost not only legislation but also pro-business political candidates. The Chamber's political action committee will broadcast confidential reports on regional and national races and channel donations to races it considers close.

In the fall, the Chamber will expand its broadcasting to five hours of daily programming, Monday through Friday. New programs will be added: a daily update on Congressional action and an assessment of the prospects of key bills; in-depth question-and-answer sessions with experts on business; economic and monetary forecasts; and reports on developments in business lobbying.

Though Chamber vice president Carl Grant insists that "Biznet will revolutionize the way business communicates . . . and will provide access to the powerful and influential leaders," reaction in Washington to the system is mixed. Other business groups, lacking the large membership and budget of the Chamber of Commerce, look on the venture with a mixture of skepticism and envy. "We took a look at cable television, but frankly we didn't have the resources," explained Lee Hamilton, senior vice president of the National Association of Manufacturers. "If Biznet can help correct the media bias against business that would be great, but I don't know who's going to sit down and watch it." At the American Petroleum Institute, spokesman Harry H. Hardy was even more cautious: "People are watching the Chamber pretty closely to see how it works out before they go ahead with anything similar."

Labor and consumer groups are likely to be hard-pressed by the Biznet challenge. The A.F.L.-C.I.O. has publicly criticized Biznet, and has no plans to match it, preferring to examine smaller-scale alternatives, such as an Institute for Public Affairs and expanded radio and newspaper campaigns. At Common Cause, Fred Wertheimer has said that telecommunications is the "battleground of the future," though staff members there are uncertain how Biznet will change electoral politics. Nancy Drabble, director of Congress Watch, observed, "Already the business community is much more sophisticated than labor or citizen groups in their lobbying techniques. Now that they are jumping into telecommunications, they may be leaving us behind in the dust. While they are beaming messages around the country, we will still be sending out our mimeographed alerts."

The struggle between business lobbies and citizens' groups has always been uneven. The central question, which will take some years to answer, is whether the Chamber's investment in Biznet will give it the overwhelming advantage it hopes for. Biznet's overhead may be too great, its production too time-consuming, its technology too troublesome. Labor unions may decide to get involved in sophisticated telecommunications as well. Citizens' groups may be able to ride the wave of cable and low-power television into a new era of citizen-sponsored and -controlled broadcasting.

On the other hand, if Biznet accomplishes even a portion of what the Chamber has in mind, and if labor and citizens' groups make no response, politics in America will change. As Mark Green, president of the Democracy Project put it, "When you combine exponentially increasing corporate PAC spending in elections with this increased ability to amplify business's political viewpoints electronically, we take a step closer to an America in which policy is determined not by the Congressional 535 but by the *Fortune* 500." □

THE FILARTIGA CASE

Paraguay Torture In U.S. Courts

ERIC NADLER

Dr. Joel Filartiga was preparing to treat the two dozen or so peasants gathered outside his small free clinic in the rural town of Ybycui, Paraguay, one morning in the spring of 1976 when he received a telephone call that his 17-year-old son, Joelito, had "suffered a tragedy." After closing his office, the doctor sped the eighty miles to his home in the capital city of Asunción, where his brother greeted him tearfully: "They have killed your son."

Police on the scene said it was a crime of passion—the youth had been murdered by a jealous husband whom they now had in custody. Case closed. But it didn't take the trained eye of a doctor to recognize the bruises, cuts and burns all over the boy's body for what they were: the work of skilled torturers adept at handling the *picana*, an electric cattle prod. The doctor also couldn't help seeing the aluminum wire stuck in the yet-erect penis of his dead son, the broken teeth and the fresh rope marks on the wrists. For twenty-two years an often outspoken opponent of the rule of Paraguayan dictator Gen. Alfredo Stroessner, Filartiga, then 43, had himself been the victim of government torture three times; he estimated his son had suffered for nearly an hour before succumbing to his wounds. And he was certain that the son had died for the political sins of the father.

Filartiga then began a Kafkaesque journey through the Paraguayan legal system, which eventually denied him the justice he demanded. But, perhaps more important, through a series of unusual circumstances he was able to institute an extraordinary civil suit against his son's torturers—not in Paraguay but in the United States.

In 1979, Filartiga learned that Americo Pena, the former inspector general of police in Asunción and the man he ac-

Eric Nadler is a New York City-based freelance writer.

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cuses of directing the torture of Joelito, was living in Brooklyn, so he brought suit against him in the Federal court system. A district judge dismissed the suit as outside the purview of U.S. law, and Pena, who was an illegal alien, was deported. But the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit overruled the lower court. Judge Irving R. Kaufman interpreted a 1789 statute to mean that because government torture by other countries violated the "law of nations," it was a cognizable wrong in U.S. courts—a landmark human rights decision that establishes a new dimension in the body of law related to torture. As Judge Kaufman noted: "Our holding today giving effect to a jurisdictional provision enacted by our first Congress is a small but important step in the fulfillment of the ageless dream to free all people from brutal violence." And, though the *Filartiga* decision authorizes only civil suits in such cases, it marks the first time that U.S. courts have gone into an area traditionally reserved for the executive and legislative branches of government—branches which are too often constrained by political interests to take effective action in halting human rights violations.

This February a hearing was held in a Brooklyn courtroom to set damages in the Filartiga case, upon which Pena, who refused to return to the United States, defaulted. The family had asked for $10 million, although it doesn't especially want the money—and, since the award would have to be recognized by the Paraguayan courts, doesn't really expect it. "What we really want," said Filartiga, a portly, white-haired man, "is $10 million worth of human rights in our country." The finding of the U.S. magistrate is due in several months.

But the importance of the hearing went far beyond the question of money and was evident to those who have witnessed political persecution first-hand. "This is the first time that a judge is going to judge torture," Jacobo Timerman, the exiled Argentine human rights activist, testified at the hearing. "That is quite different from condemning torture. . . . This is the first time in which there is nobody to be accused except torture itself."

Paraguay has the oldest dictatorship in Latin America, and has been under martial law almost continuously since Stroessner assumed power in a military coup in 1954. According to Robert White, U.S. ambassador to Paraguay from 1977 to 1980, the tiny nation is "clearly the closest thing to a totalitarian state we have in the Western hemisphere. There is, in effect, no law." At the court hearing, White described torture in Paraguay as "institutionalized" and "routine." "There is almost no one in Paraguay who hasn't been touched by torture," he said, "in the sense that they or someone in their family has been tortured."

Amnesty International, in its 1981 report, said that torture, detention without trial and "disappearances" are common in Paraguay. The human rights report issued by the U.S. State Department for 1981 asserted that "the political and civil rights guarantees in Paraguay's constitution continue to be violated."

Despite repeated promises, the Stroessner regime has yet to schedule on-site visits by human rights organizations such as the Inter-American Human Rights Commission, and foreigners who are thought to be human rights activists are often denied entry. Last August, for example, a plane carrying the winner of the 1980 Nobel Peace Prize, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, was denied permission to land.

Because of the human rights policy of President Carter, the Paraguayan government was forced to make some concessions and more than 500 political prisoners were freed. But the present Administration's emphasis on anti-Communist *Realpolitik* has taken the heat off the regime, which received $6.3 million in U.S. economic assistance last year.

Filartiga's defiance of Stroessner's government intensified after his son's death. Ordered to bury Joelito immediately, the Filartigas decided to display the naked body publicly for two weeks so that hundreds of Paraguayans would see the torture wounds. Photographs of the mutilated body were distributed to newspapers. Three independent autopsies which concluded that Joelito's death was the result of "professional methods of torture" were publicized. Filartiga tried to press murder charges against Pena. (The family's lawyer in that proceeding was disbarred and reportedly taken to a police barracks, shackled to a wall and threatened with death by Pena himself.)

The Stroessner government is angered and scared by the Filartigas' lawsuit here, which has already caused it great international embarrassment. "After the case was decided . . . a Paraguay official, one of the people closest to General Stroessner, told me that I just had to do everything possible to get its decision reversed," former Ambassador White testified at the hearing. "They don't really understand the independence of the court system here."

Filartiga has paid a price for his pursuit of justice. The failure of his lawsuit in Paraguay led to a damage claim by one of the defendants, and that provided the government with an excuse to try to shut down the Ybycui clinic. (The clinic is one of a handful of primary-care facilities open to the Paraguayan poor, serving a community of approximately 47,000 people.) Filartiga, who spent several months recently in the United States in connection with his lawsuit, was threatened with arrest if he returned to Paraguay. Nonetheless, he flew home April 7, hoping his safety would be guaranteed as a result of a letter-writing campaign directed at State Department officials that was organized by his attorneys from the Center for Constitutional Rights. "With this Administration now in Washington, I can be certain of nothing," Filartiga said just before he returned to Paraguay. He was met by the U.S. consul at the Asunción airport, where his luggage, which contained valuable medical supplies, was vandalized. Thus far, the Paraguayan government's threats have not been carried out.

A talented artist, Filartiga had his work exhibited in several shows during his stay here. His etchings reveal the influence of the mural style of Diego Rivera. During a recent interview, he passed one of his pictures across a table. It showed the faces of two screaming young men and an upraised arm clutching a machete. "This one is for Joelito," he said in a quiet voice, "so that we don't forget." □

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LABOR IN A DYING LAND

Workers Pulling Against the Tide

PAUL BUHLE

The cars line up outside the Brown & Sharpe machine tool works in North Kingstown, Rhode Island, from about 7 A.M., bringing in hundreds of supervisors, engineers and strikebreakers to cross the picket line. On the line, even after six months, are perhaps a fifth of the 1,600 strikers on an average day, more than a thousand when the announcement of a general picket goes out. They park their cars in the shopping center down the road, walk over to the trash barrels burning paper and wood at the plant entrance, smoke endless cigarettes, wave their fists, curse, laugh, shuffle around to pass the time. For the most part they are amiable, but you can hear the tension in their voices when they talk. The main issue has never been wages, but the company's right to usurp the workers' traditional prerogatives, to change their jobs at will, to take away some definition of themselves and their work. And it involves something more elusive: an attempt to "soften up" the union for future give-backs, perhaps decertification. In short, to end an era in labor-management relations.

On March 22, the strike escalated. While the main contingent of strikers spread out along the wooded road leading to the plant entrance, a smaller group, which included women workers, strikers' wives, sympathetic students from Brown University and a smattering of activists from other union locals, stayed at the entrance. Suddenly, rocks flew out of the woods toward the passing cars and vans loaded with scabs. Local police officers and state troopers rushed in the direction of the noise, leaving the entrance unguarded. About a hundred strikers and their supporters then sat down across the entrance, singing "We Shall Not Be Moved."

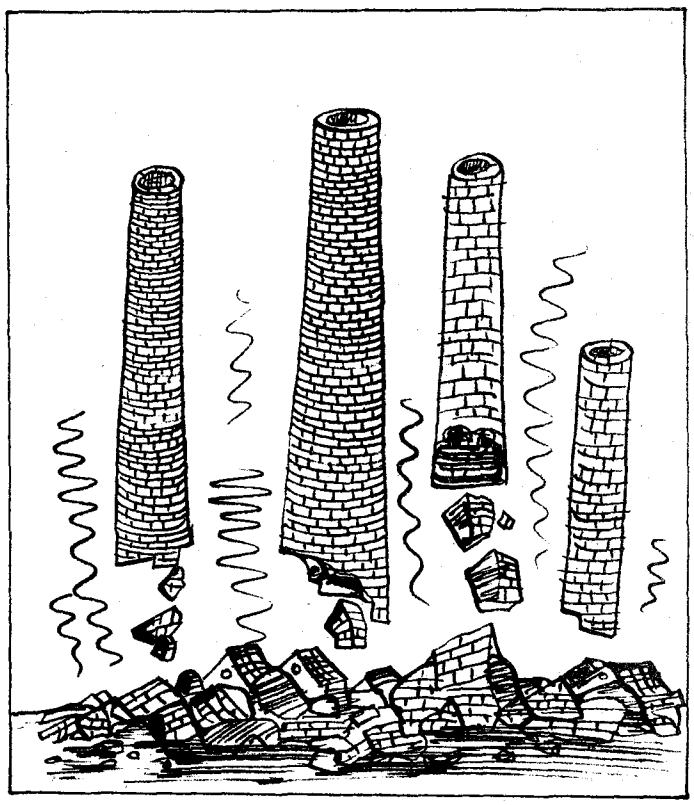
It was a curiously touching scene, an odd mixture of the 1960s and the 1980s. One of the strikers wore a Kent State sweatshirt; another had a NORML button on his cap. They mixed easily with students who had demonstrated at Seabrook, but also with older union veterans who talked—as so many had during the Solidarity Day rallies last fall—about the tough days of early unionism. Here and there you caught sight of a kind of unifying figure, like the president of the bus drivers' local, a former antiwar activist grown fond of quoting Eugene Debs.

Police officers and state troopers returned with their new technological toy, the "pepper-fogger," a device that looks like a cross between a vacuum cleaner and a cattle prod. After the first sweep of the acrid gas, the sit-downers laughed: "I'm gettin' high! More smoke!" A few more sweeps and only a scattering remained, their faces against the pavement, their coats pulled over their heads. Then it was finished, with a few minor scuffles and arrests. Two days later, as strikers and members of other unions marched on the state house in Providence, Governor J. Joseph Garrahy mildly condemned the use of chemicals.

As well he should. The use of gas brings to the surface tensions with fifty-year-old roots and exposes a shadow looming over the future of the region. The last time Rhode Island strikers had been gassed was the 1934 general strike of textile workers, when police clubbed, tear-gassed and shot down rioters. That round of struggles, culminating in the 1940s, brought industrial unions to the textile mills, whose owners promptly moved their operations to the South. The architectural landscape throughout the state is dotted with hulking ghosts of abandoned buildings, with gables and belfries staring down on deteriorating mill villages that will likely never recover.

Now, prompted by mounting energy costs, high interest rates and the lure of cheap, pliable workers overseas, a pullout by the remaining operations is threatened. Small shops with a handful or a few dozen workers often simply give up. Large firms demand that state legislatures repeal strikers' benefits, reduce workers' compensation, lower business taxes and provide other revenue schemes to get desperately needed mileage out of corporate profits. And the unions have been put on notice.

The emerging battle lines, in this strike especially, have an almost European character of privilege-against-populace. The Brown & Sharpe fortune goes back to the early nineteenth century, when New England's satanically dark and noisy mills succeeded slavery and the slave trade as the capitalization of misery. For almost a century, until unions



DRAWINGS BY JC SUARES

Paul Buhle works with the Community Labor Organizing Committee in Providence and is an editor of its newsletter.

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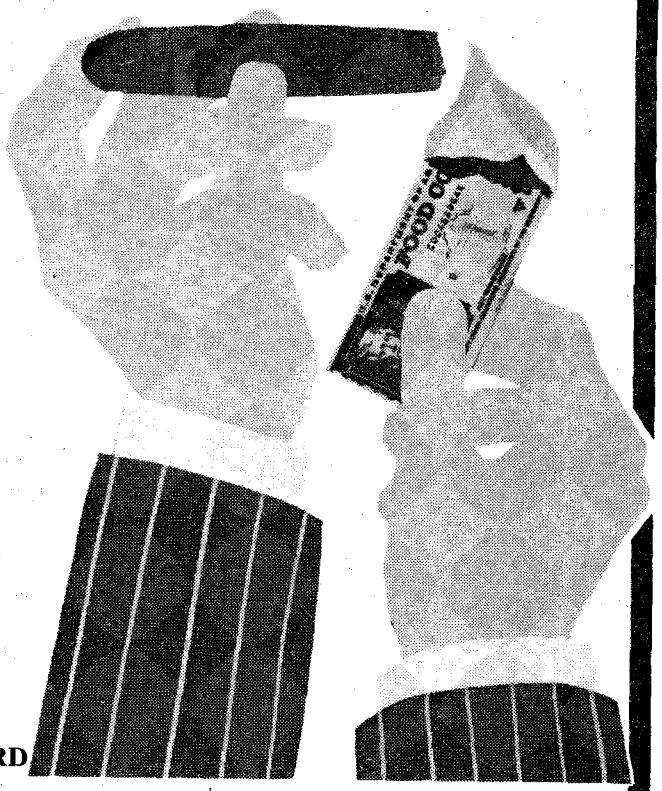

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became powerful, mill hands complained of intolerably monotonous work for long hours with low pay, the impossibility of advancement and the authoritarian control of all aspects of life in the towns where mayor, minister and supervisor reported to the same boss. Rhode Island, the scene of a brief civil war in 1842 over voting rights (the rebellion's leader, Thomas Dorr, was said to have eaten apples from the tree that grew out of Roger Williams's coffin), lacked universal male suffrage until the Knights of Labor forced the issue in the 1880s.

Still largely Catholic, heavily immigrant, second only to Washington, D.C., in cancer deaths, Rhode Island remains predominantly a state of rich and poor. Mile after mile of triple-decker houses in towns like Woonsocket and Pawtucket look much the same as they did in 1907, when Lewis Hine photographed them as part of his investigation of child-labor conditions. Even the smallish suburbs offer little escape; many of them are uncomfortably close to the worst chemical dump sites in southern New England. The majority of the people—Irish, Italian, Polish, French-Canadian and Portuguese, with a scattering of blacks and Latins—experience little upward mobility, while the Old Money continues to sustain the picturesque historic mansions and their inhabitants. Brown & Sharpe board chairman Henry Sharpe (a cousin of Rhode Island Senator John Chafee) is one of the state's leading philanthropists.

For some decades, Rhode Island has also had the reputation of being a place where few people will cross a picket line. According to Brown & Sharpe strikers, the company has had to bring in scabs from Massachusetts and the rural parts of Rhode Island, where the "Swamp Yankees" still dominate. Whatever else the mills left behind, a sense of us-against-them is passed from generation to generation. Business leaders denounce this as "socialistic," and in a small way they may be right. Rhode Island went solidly against Reagan. The Providence Central Labor Council passed one of the strongest labor resolutions against the Administration's support for the junta in El Salvador. The Catholic church, though presided over by an archconservative, also contains a vocal minority committed to social justice.

Business has set itself to test these loyalties. The hard-knuckled management team at Brown & Sharpe recently demanded the right to conduct physicals at any time. Along with the firm's insistence on "job flexibility," this would mean that an older worker could be assigned the heaviest work in the shop and, if his performance was judged "unsatisfactory," fired on the spot. Seniority and job security would be useless. Young workers make only $6 to $9 an hour, but the state's only other important industry, jewelry manufacturing, pays even less and has recently come under attack for its hazardous factory conditions. Young or old, workers feel their backs against the wall.

It is a time for symbols. The strike's first martyr, a 62-year-old woman close to retirement, braved an icy January picket line for six hours and then died of a stroke. A half-dozen years ago that death would probably have been prevented: an earlier, more paternalistic management actually built a wooden shed to protect pickets from the winter cold. This time the shed was turned into a communications center for the hated Wackenhut security guards and was set afire on the day of the gassing.

A half-hour's drive from North Kingstown, in Pawtucket, the first water-powered cotton textile mill in the new world started operating in 1790. The artisans of that day, imbued with the democratic values of the Revolution, bitterly resisted the imposition of factory discipline and the increasing control of society by the mill barons' agents. Nearly two centuries later, we have entered yet another cycle of far-reaching conflict. The courts, the legislatures, the industrialists and the pickets themselves will shortly give signs of labor's future in New England. There should be quite a fight ahead. □

BEHIND REAGAN'S SECRETS ORDER

Burying the Diplomatic Record

BETTY MILLER UNTERBERGER

President Reagan's April 2 executive order on classifying government information is a giant step backward toward the days of official secrecy, reversing a recent trend to more openness in government. Although the President stated that the new order would not permit "excessive classification of documents," it does reverse the presumption of accessibility in the Carter order it replaces in four important respects: by eliminating the requirement that officials must consider the public's right to know before classifying documents; by eliminating the requirement that classification must be based on "identifiable" potential damage to the national security; by eliminating the ban on the reclassification of material already released; and by expanding the definition of "foreign government information" from information received in confidence to information received with the expectation of secrecy.

One of the most damaging—and publicized—results of this order will be to curtail severely information released under the Freedom of Information Act. A less well-known result will be to close off even more records to historians and other scholars, especially in matters concerning foreign policy. The effect of this curtailment—which began before the Reagan order but will be acutely compounded by it—can best be seen in the case of American diplomatic records of the post-1949 period, particularly the State Department's vital multivolume series, *Foreign Relations of the United States.*

The *Foreign Relations* series, the official documentary

Betty Miller Unterberger is a professor of the history of American foreign relations at Texas A&M University and former chair of the State Department's Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation.

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record of American foreign policy, has been published by the State Department since 1861 and comprises more than 250 volumes. More than half of these volumes have been published since 1945, and another forty-five are currently being prepared. The series is the major printed source and guide for the study of postwar international affairs, rivaling similar publications issued by the governments of Britain, France, Italy and West Germany. But as a result of recent declassification problems, compounded by Reagan budgetary constraints, the full diplomatic record may be indefinitely hidden.

For most of this century, the *Foreign Relations* volumes were released after a delay period of about fifteen years. In the 1950s that interval increased to eighteen years and in the 1960s to twenty-three years. And though a delay period of no more than twenty years has been strongly advocated by every recent Administration, declassification roadblocks have now put the series even further behind schedule. Many *Foreign Relations* volumes are now coming out twenty-nine years after the fact, some of them have passed the thirty-year line, and there is real question as to when we will see additional materials of the 1950-54 period.

In 1980 the State Department's Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation—representing the American Historical Association, the American Political Science Association and the American Society of International Law—indicated its concern over the slowdown, if not the actual stoppage, of the *Foreign Relations* series. The last year in which a substantial number of volumes were published was 1977, when seven were released. That number dropped to three in 1978 and to two in 1979. Only one volume was released in 1980, despite assurances given to the advisory committee that between seven and ten volumes would be published; since January 1981 only two additional volumes have been released.

It was obvious to the advisory committee that the delay in issuing the *Foreign Relations* volumes was caused by the creation in 1978 of a Classification-Declassification Center in the State Department, which over the years has taken to itself the power to "re-review" documents that had already been cleared for release. The C.D.C. decided to revoke the clearances of twenty unpublished volumes covering the 1950-54 period—some of which were already bound or in advanced page proofs—and "re-review" all the documents in those volumes. It argued that the original review of information had been inadequate and that the release of some would endanger the national security, and it said that certain other information previously passed had become "re-sensitized" because of changes in international circumstances. As a result of C.D.C. intervention, at least 10 percent of the 1950-54 documents have been reclassified, including much of the essential historical material.

Historians also complain that important documents are not being made available to them and are not being deposited in the National Archives. The Archives has only recently received any materials from the post-1949 period, and the prospect of their release in the next few years is bleak. Currently, researchers who wish to use these records

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must make item-by-item F.O.I.A. requests to the State Department, whereupon its Foreign Affairs Information Management Center must retrieve and copy the documents and the C.D.C. must approve them for release. Under the new Reagan order, the review process will be even more stringent than in the past.

Steven Garfinkel, director of the Information Security Oversight Office in the General Services Administration, has indicated that the amount of information classified under the new order will not be greater than in the Carter Administration, and he has promised a schedule for the orderly declassification of material received by the Archives. However, Glenn English, an Oklahoma Democrat who is the chairman of the House Subcommittee on Government Information and Individual Rights, argues that the order "slows or stops altogether the declassification of historical documents," and he plans to hold hearings on the matter.

The declassification procedures at the National Archives are already complicated enough, and Reagan budget cuts are making them more difficult still. Before records become available for research, they must be reviewed, often page by page. There are more than 6 million pages of documents in the 1950-54 files; even to begin to review this much material during a time of personnel cutbacks poses major administrative problems.

Scholars are likely to be appalled by the results of an experiment run by the National Archives in which the new C.D.C. guidelines were applied to Record Group 59 of the State Department decimal files relating to Korea, China and Southeast Asia. That declassification experiment withdrew 19.3 percent of the pages reviewed, 3,798 pages out of a total of 19,630 pages. Of these pages, 41 percent were State Department material; the rest came from the C.I.A., other departments or foreign governments. It was also found that it now takes forty to eighty hours to review one box of records in Record Group 59; under the old guidelines, a box could be reviewed in an hour. The budget cutbacks will reduce the declassification staff of the National Archives from approximately 100 to about 25, so the prognosis for access to the 1950-54 documents appears dim indeed. Recently, the State Department agreed to provide partial funding to enable the Archives to rehire some of its fired employees to review documents on a contract basis. Nevertheless, given present and projected cutbacks and the problem of diminishing resources, it is highly unlikely that the Archives can accept the State Department records at any time in the foreseeable future. And even aside from the problem of review, the new executive order will result, according to one archivist, in as many as 20 percent of the records remaining classified after they are transferred.

Until recently, the United States had the most liberal policy in the world with respect to making its foreign policy records available for historical research. It is a tragedy that the American government has now fallen behind the other Western democracies in the release of its records. And with the new executive order on classification, which protects the public's right to know about as well as the Reagan safety net protects the poor, it will fall even farther behind. □

New Right

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

allowances from their parents would not stop coming.

The neoconservatives were gentle people, highly educated but naïve academicians. To one who lives in the world of private business, they seem like children who cannot quite understand what daddy does for a living. Yet they enjoy money, as Podhoretz has so loudly said. They are unashamedly ambitious, almost greedy. They do not know or wish to know the risks of daily life in the world of business; they are more comfortable in the role of consultant, advising others on which risks to take.

All of them suffer a confusion of geography. Tied to Europe and European New York, they cannot quite imagine America. They know the history, they have the most recent statistics at hand, but they have no conception of space, of the way prairies diffuse politics even in the electronic age, of the interruption a mountain causes to a collective. The miracle of American orneriness that did not show itself to Tocqueville does not show itself to them, for they, too, are visitors in a new land, differing from Tocqueville only in that their travels are more limited.

The genesis of Jewish neoconservatism in his own life has been described by Norman Podhoretz in *Making It*, "My Negro Problem and Ours," *Breaking Ranks* and other works that many Jews found embarrassing and without the universal application Podhoretz had imagined. In these works he speaks often, perhaps with unintended accuracy, of his "conversion," for he spent most of his early years of political awareness following the traditional Jewish ideas of mercy and social justice.

Publication of the confessions in *Making It* was a brave, ingenuous and naïve act. Had the book been written as fiction, Podhoretz might now hold a place in American letters similar to that of Philip Roth. Instead, Podhoretz became the intellectual version of Sammy Glick. The reviews of *Making It* were cruel, unforgiving of a still young man who had, like so many young critics, made no real connection with either art or life. Criticism of the critic was undoubtedly painful. The young editor and critic fought back, but he placed too much value on criticism; he fought too hard. His response was unbecoming, as the book had been unbecoming. The power of Podhoretz was evanescent, the vulgarity remained.

Gossip about the neoconservative movement often attributes the conversion of Podhoretz to the failure of his book, but that theory seems glib: This was not Herman Melville distraught over the reception of *Moby Dick*, nor was Podhoretz merely a spiteful child turning on his old

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Earl Shorris is the author of three novels, Ofay, The Boots of the Virgin *and* Under the Fifth Sun. *His nonfiction books are* The Death of the Great Spirit *and* The Oppressed Middle. *This article is excerpted from* Jews Without Mercy, *to be published May 7 by Anchor Press/Doubleday.*

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friends as he imagined they had turned on him, nor had an exceptionally bright and well-educated young man suddenly become a thick-witted street fighter. The book itself was the cause. The veneer of the Jewish intellectual was burned away in the writing; the vulgar man emerged and took up the appropriate philosophy.

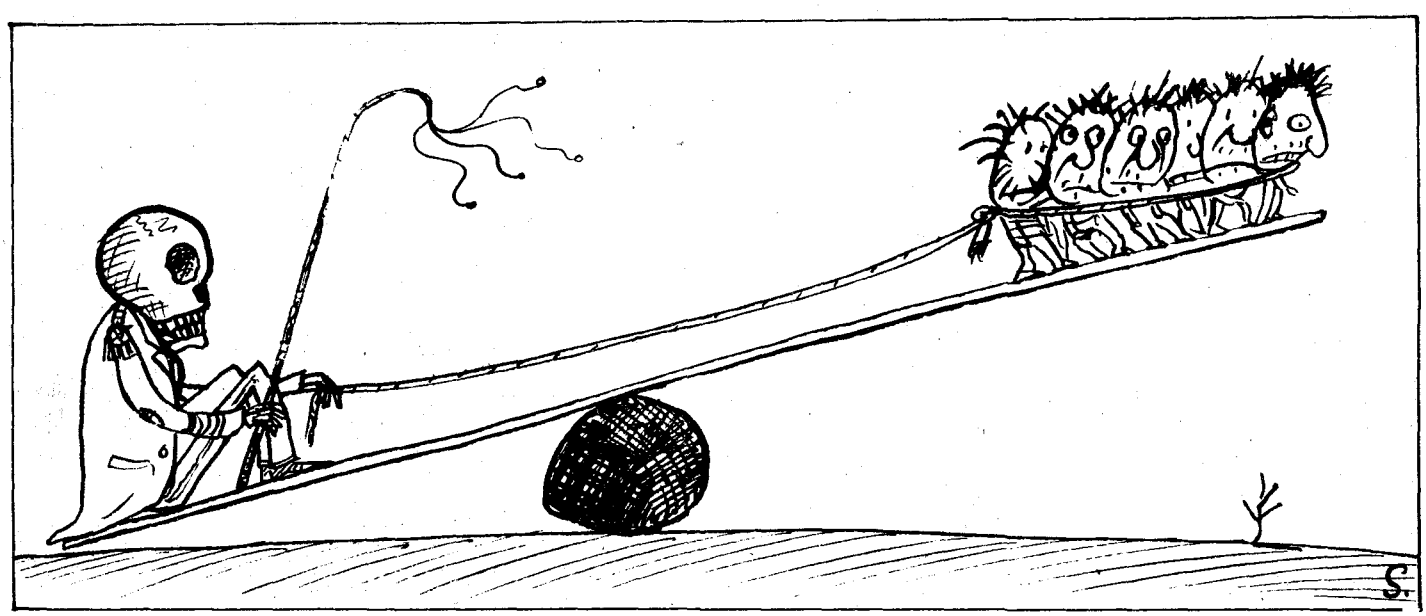
With the distance of almost a dozen years, one can see the error in the construction of Podhoretz's position as clearly as a wrong move in a chess player's midgame. The editor of "the Jewish intellectual monthly" thought Jews, and therefore Jewish ethics and culture, were vulgar. He confused the harsh surroundings of lower-middle-class and working-class life with the poverty of spirit of true vulgarity. Although he had been schooled in Jewish ethics and theology, the elegance of it was lost to him: How could true elegance speak broken English, live among black-skinned people, wear babushkas, eat chicken fat and work in factories? Could an elegant person live in the back of the store? Could any outsider be anything but vulgar? If outsiders were not vulgar, why were they outsiders? To a man who had studied in England, his Russian forebears must have seemed strange indeed!

So Podhoretz became something else, a new Saul of Tarsus breaking the yoke of the Law. But this new Saul did not replace the Law with the spirit; he chose the appetites. The elegance of the Jewish love of mercy had been replaced by the desire for power; the beauty of man's belief in social justice had been replaced by the vulgarity of self-interest. Podhoretz had written himself into a corner; in the years that followed he would devote his life to justifying and publicizing vulgarity, but not until he had converted the Jews would he be comfortable.

It was not difficult for Podhoretz to find allies and converts and to begin raising young Jews in the philosophy of neoconservatism. Events had become his conspirators: Fear sat on the left hand of the neoconservatives, comfort sat on their right.

Many of the converts have told of the journey across the political spectrum, although not with the detail or the honesty of Podhoretz. Most of the others have begun with rationalization rather than confession, attempting to hide their new-found preference for vulgarity. Almost all of them have said that it is because they are Jewish that they have become neoconservatives. They speak for each other; they help each other with grants, consulting fees and introductions to money and power. It is a close camaraderie for all but Daniel Bell, who resigned as co-editor of *The Public Interest* after he and Irving Kristol founded the magazine, and who was given into the hands of Michael Novak in the July 1981 issue of *Commentary* to be drummed out of the corps as one whose "imagination still operates within a Marxian horizon." Novak, a Polish Catholic and the publicist of "ethnic interests," the new euphemism for racism, delivered the *coup de grace* earlier in the same paragraph: "Bell is said to have quipped that he is a liberal in politics, a socialist in economics, and a conservative in culture. The single most systematic strength in his thinking—and simultaneously, the single most glaring weakness—is that the socialist in him frequently overwhelms both the liberal and the conservative." The club is warm and supportive, but it is restricted. Bell, the best mind among the neoconservatives, cannot be considered a neoconservative: He simply could not bring himself to trade ethics for vulgarity.

For those Jews who made the complete journey, neoconservatism began with a misapplication of Hannah Arendt's work on totalitarianism, a misapplication in which she concurred. Arendt theorized that two of the most important steps on the way to a totalitarian state were the atomization and the massification of society. And so it was under Hitler and Stalin. The problem in Arendt's work is that she arrived at theory by abstracting description, a problem she herself recognized when she doubted that she had truly found the origins of totalitarianism. She then applied the abstracted description to America during the turmoil of the 1960s, erroneously conflating America, Europe and the Soviet Union. In her misreading of America, the student radicals, who could hardly agree on the day of the week or the time of day, became massified man, the mob. In their



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jejune radicalism she saw the end of all cultural authority and morality. That much of their protest was against what they saw as the more insidious forces of totalitarianism in American society did not occur to her, and for good reason—she did not know enough about life in America to understand what the disorganized, incoherent children were pointing to.

Her misreading of the situation provided the jumping-off point for the Jewish neoconservatives: The mob was coming and it was coming out of the universities that had given the Jews a way up out of the ghetto. Not just the road to respectability was under attack, however; the student radicals were opposed to respectability itself. They did not want to be Nathan Glazer or Sidney Hook or Daniel Bell or Irving Kristol or Seymour Martin Lipset or Midge Decter or even the editor of a Jewish intellectual monthly; ergo, they must be communists.

It seems comic to describe this argument for the genesis of neoconservatism, namely, the reaction of civilized men to the student radicals, as merely petulant, but under the theorizing, the quoting of statistics and the defense of Western civilization one finds mere petulance: The children spat upon the accomplishments of the parents; only communism could lead them to such ingratitude, such madness.

Almost every one of the founders of Jewish neoconservatism produced a book or a major article about the student radicals. Kristol wrote an article for *Fortune* about the prevalence of Jews among the student radicals. Mario Savio and Tom Hayden did not figure prominently in his article: The attack on Jews by a Jew was to prove to the readers of *Fortune* that Jews were O.K.; they weren't all bearded radicals.

Social instability was bad for the Jews, said the Jewish neoconservatives; every time a nation went through a period of instability Jews suffered. They pointed to Hitler. They failed to point to Napoleon. They were frightened by the attacks on such historically benign institutions as universities. The breakdown of order in the streets and on the campuses reminded them of what they had read about Germany as the Nazis came to power. A repetition of history seemed possible. They sought to uphold the cultural authority that would prevent disaster for America—and particularly for American Jews. The radical students claimed to be following in the footsteps of the Hebrew prophets; the Jewish neoconservatives sought their authority in eighteenth-century liberalism.

Amid the turmoil of student riots on college campuses and in the streets of Chicago, the black radicals were having some trouble making themselves heard. The Black Panther organization, for example, was composed of four publicists, a handful of ex-convicts and a great many motherly women, high school students and junior high school students, a surprisingly large number of whom were physically handicapped. A major activity, perhaps the major activity, at the headquarters of the Black Panthers was the doling out of food money to shy, hungry and deeply embarrassed middle-aged men. The money was given out by women, and the amounts were small and not accompanied by either moralizing or political propaganda. The Black Panthers, the most radical and vocal of the black groups claiming to be on the left, were heartbreaking, for they were a perfect reflection of the powerlessness of the black poor.

When the Black Panthers and a few other black radicals announced their support for the Palestine Liberation Organization and their opposition to "Zionist imperialist racism," many Jews felt betrayed. They pointed to the long and deep Jewish involvement in civil rights, the two Jewish boys who had been murdered while trying to help bring civil rights to blacks in the South, and the Jewish financial support of civil rights organizations. And what did they get in return? Attacks on Israel, black anti-Semitism, the Jew-baiting poetry of LeRoi Jones. Jewish contributions to civil rights organizations stopped. The Jews who were to become the neoconservatives re-examined their relationship to blacks. They had always agreed with Cervantes's description of the world as composed of two families, the Haves and the Have-Nots, but they realized that Jews in America had moved into a new family and blacks had not.* The interests of the Haves are very different from those of the Have-Nots. Another step on the political journey to the right was taken.

The new attitude toward blacks led to a new attitude toward affirmative action programs and public welfare. The Bakke case merely proved what Jewish neoconservatives had been saying for some time: A Have of greater merit could be displaced by a Have-Not of lesser merit. A disproportionate number of Jews went to the best colleges, universities and professional schools. They went because the old quota system had been broken: Students were accepted on merit. A return to quotas would have the effect of displacing many Jews. Bizarre versions of bell-curve distributions were drawn and a great deal was written about the justice of merit systems; Herbert Spencer's formula of the survival of the fittest resonated in the prose.

A different view of government and the distribution of wealth came along with black support of the P.L.O. and the fear of quota systems. Once the Jewish neoconservatives had found a good reason for ending their long association with the blacks, they could see the way to opposing the role of the Federal government in many aspects of life. Business was for the Haves; government redistribution programs

*Many Jews have moved into the economic world of the Haves, but few, if any, have learned to feel the sense of security that is normally associated with the rich. All Jews are aware of anti-Semitism and all Jews are sensitive to it. One cannot, of course, look into another person's mind, but it seems likely that even those Jews who wholeheartedly embrace the interests of the Haves must do so by suppressing their knowledge of the true comfort of the rich, which is to know that they and their children are comfortable, powerful and safe—and will remain so.

Jews may join the family of the Haves in the countinghouse, but the more profound distinction puts Jews among the Have-Nots. The quality of self-delusion required of a Jew who wishes to consider himself among the Haves has sometimes led to self-destructive behavior. Hannah Arendt has considered this problem along a parallel line in her discussion of the parvenu and the pariah. The behavior of Ronald Reagan toward Israel, Jewish lobbyists, Jacobo Timerman and so forth during the first year of his Administration is an indication that Jewish support of his candidacy as the representative of the interests of the Haves may have been the kind of self-destructive behavior that comes of the failure to consider the profound conditions of one's life as the true conditions.

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were not. If government had the power to regulate the workplace, the safety of products and the use of the land, it was not a large step to ever stronger affirmative action programs—quotas.

The liberalism of the eighteenth century favored economic inequality—Leibniz had shown that inequality among men was the best of all possible worlds, for it reflected the inequality of creatures in nature—while the liberalism of the last third of the twentieth century was moving from equality of opportunity to equality of condition. Only a large and very powerful government could enforce equality of condition. Only a large and very powerful central government could redistribute wealth on an equal basis, and the Jews stood to lose a great deal in an equalizing of wealth.

In the language of the neoconservatives, all of this had to do with Jewish interests. When they were still on the left, Jewish interests meant social justice, human rights, peace, a world in which mercy prevailed; but as they moved to the right, the definition of Jewish interests changed, becoming more parochial, more direct. The grand scheme would take care of itself; Jews had only to pursue their own self-interest to survive and prosper. Some neoconservatives went further, threatening that if Jews did not vigorously pursue their self-interests they might not prosper or even survive.

Among the chief Jewish interests, said the neoconservatives, was Israel, the tiny modern Western state in the Middle East, the Jewish homeland, the promised land. A Jew can interpret the meaning of Israel in many ways: The state is beleaguered, surrounded by large and ever more powerful enemies; Israel is David, invincible in battle; Israel is a great socialist experiment; the kibbutz was a small part of the settlement of the state, which is an ally of the noncommunist, capitalist West; Israel is the true home of all Jews of the world; Israel is a foreign country in which the majority of the population is Jewish; God gave Israel to the Jews; guns gave Israel to the Jews; Israel wants peace; Israel has become the modern Sparta; and so on and on. It is said that there are seventy interpretations of every word in the Bible; there are at least as many interpretations of the meaning of Israel.

All Jews want Israel to survive. There is no disagreement about the end. The disagreements between neoconservatives and other Jews center on the means and on the compromises in ethics American Jews must make to aid Israel under the Begin government. The neoconservatives came to two firm conclusions: First, there are no limits in regard to Israel; the government of the state can do no wrong, nor can supporters of Israel err in moral choices if those choices are made with the interests of Israel in mind; and second, a politically conservative government in America would be more likely to support Israel than a government that leaned to the left. When John Connally, the favorite candidate of big business in the 1980 Presidential primaries, indicated his willingness to trade Israel for Arab oil, the neoconservatives did not pause to review their conclusion; they simply switched their allegiance to Ronald Reagan, who was solid on Israel.

The two conclusions on Israel as a Jewish interest fit nicely with the other political positions that were becoming more comfortable for these "converted" Jews; they could openly ally themselves with the right wing of the Republican Party. Before the 1980 Presidential election, *Commentary* devoted an issue to a symposium on "Liberalism & The Jews." The symposium was heavily weighted toward the right but included brief essays from Jewish social democrats. There was, of course, no consensus, but the majority view was clear: Jewish interests had been redefined and they were clearly on the right. Every argument in the symposium was tough-minded, almost chillingly secular, except that of Michael Walzer, who still considered himself part of a nation that began in an exodus from slavery in Egypt.

Now firmly aligned with those in power in America, the Jewish neoconservatives have concluded their political journey and may assume the role adumbrated in the writings of Podhoretz and Kristol; they may become the new court Jews, indispensable advisers who use their influence with kings to protect the interests of other Jews. In the past, court Jews have been financial advisers. Milton Friedman might have fit that role, but not the new Jews. They come from the social sciences (excepting Podhoretz), and while they consider themselves intellectuals, with the broad range of knowledge of that modern description of the Renaissance man, they will have to bow to others for expert advice on economic policy, arms, the hard sciences, etc.; their expertise will come in manipulating the public through policy and publicity. And they will be invaluable advisers, for they know that despite their protestations to the contrary, the increasingly unequal distribution of wealth under an Administration with eighteenth-century economic, political and social views must generate unrest among all but the favored few, leading to an increasing need for manipulation of the public to maintain power.

As court Jews they believe they can now deal most effectively with two of the issues that drove many of them to the right: the power of the Soviet Union and its anti-Semitic policies. The Jewish neoconservatives believe sincerely in the theory of Soviet plans for world dominance, and they believe with equal sincerity in the ability of the Soviet Union to achieve and hold the lead in both nuclear and conventional capabilities to wage war. As they observed the Soviet arms buildup of the last twenty years and heard the social democrats, the New Leftists and the liberal wing of the Democratic Party discuss overkill, nuclear parity, cutbacks in military spending and other ideas that seemed to them closer to pacifism or surrender than to defense, they became frightened. The ruling group in the Soviet Union made no secret of its anti-Semitism, refusing to permit Jews to emigrate at will, limiting Jewish attendance at institutions of higher education, barring the printing of Jewish prayer books and forcing Jews to carry identity cards stating that they were Jews.

Life for Jews in a world conquered by the Soviet Union is the nightmare of the Jewish neoconservatives. They believe—and not entirely without reason—that world con-

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quest by the Soviet Union would lead to the destruction of the Jews. The nightmare drives them; they are willing to do almost anything to keep it from becoming reality; it overshadows their thinking on all issues.

Many of the firstlings of Jewish neoconservatism came from the anticommunist left. Some of them—like Kristol in his article in *Commentary* in 1952—were sympathetic to the McCarthy investigations even when they were leftists. They believed in the cold war and distrusted détente. They were certain that the United States would be bested by the Russians in the negotiation of an arms limitation treaty. Anticommunism was their birthright; they did not have to be converted to it. The conversion of anticommunist leftists to anticommunist conservatives came in the search for allies and in the fear that a politically and culturally volatile nation was vulnerable to revolution or defeat.

Finally, they came to believe that the best defense against communism was not socialism but capitalism, for capitalism was not only the economic antithesis of communism, it was the religious antithesis. The connection between capitalism and religion had been made by Tawney and Weber, as well as by Hooker, Calvin and Smith: The survival of the Jews depended upon the survival of religion.

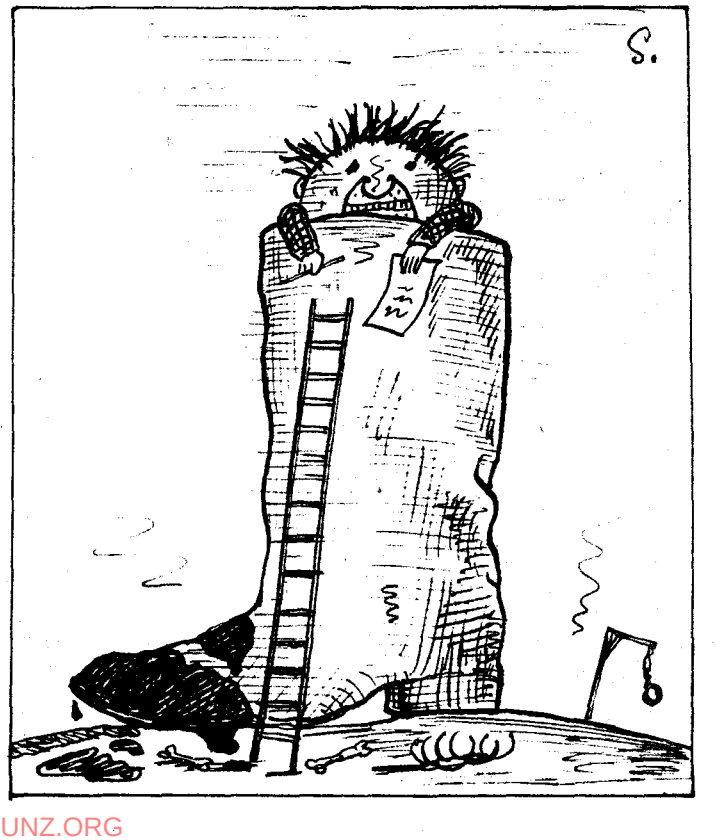
What really came first for the Jewish neoconservatives? If it was not their own economic interest, if it was Israel, they must have been such naïfs at politics or so blinded by their sudden connection to the Haves as to construct the plot of their own betrayal. By the ninth month of the Reagan Administration *The New York Times* reported that both Podhoretz and Kristol were complaining of their lack of influence in decisions on policy. By the tenth month the Administration was using the assassination of Anwar el-Sadat as a reason for selling Awacs to the Saudis, and Secretary Haig, perhaps for effect, was describing Egypt as America's foremost ally in the Middle East.

Another aspect of the journey to the right that does not appear in the published writings of the Jewish guides on the trip is the momentum of the change itself. As Nathan Glazer had once said, "Jews are a people of the left." When they abandoned that position, with its ethical, historical and cultural authority, they were set adrift. In the beginning of their journey they must have suffered a kind of cultural weightlessness more terrible than loneliness. They whirled around each other, the entire movement buffeted by events. They opposed the counterculture, they opposed the New Left; what could they say about the war in Vietnam? They opposed the blacks; what could they say to the racist theories of loony scientists and trash preachers? The twentieth century displeased them; the nineteenth century displeased them; they found a foothold in the eighteenth century and looked longingly at the political and social ideas of ancient Greece. Old friends shunned them; they looked for new friends. Jews from Brooklyn, who prepped among poor blacks in public high schools, and Jews with Lower East Side intonations in their voices, whose undergraduate clubs had been corner tables in cafeterias, told themselves that they were welcome in America's WASP establishment. Without ethics, culture or history to whisper the antidote to flattery, they did not know who they were. They moved on, each move determining the next. By 1981 they orchestrated a merciless attack on the character of a Jew who had been tortured with electric shocks and anti-Semitic execration—Jacobo Timerman.

Glazer claims a growing response to the Holocaust as one of the reasons Jews moved to the right. The formulation has the soundness of a burn victim claiming he can only pour gasoline safely while smoking a cigarette. Yet Glazer is undoubtedly correct. A rational response to the Holocaust is, as Tadeusz Borowski showed in his stories of life in a death camp, the greatest madness. The upheaval in a Jew's soul that comes with the thought of the Holocaust gives rise to fearful blind crashings that defy interpretation. After the Holocaust all Jews must ask, Why should we be merciful? Who was merciful to us? If those questions lead a Jew to abandon mercy, is he still a Jew?

Somewhere there are constants, an essence, a light like the light above the Ark that cannot be extinguished. Every Jew is empowered to describe the light. The attempt at description is not hubris but study. Any Jew may dispute the description, but it is a tenet of the religion of equals that no man can say with absolute certainty that any other man's description is wrong.

A new political movement has come to Judaism, a movement of self-interest, without mercy for the old or the poor, a movement that condemns oppression only when it serves the interests of the movement to do so. Perhaps that is the fitting description of the light in our time. It must be compared with the Judaism that has endured to find out whether it is the seventy-first interpretation of the words of the Law or the beginning of a new religion. □



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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Poems on Public Subjects

KATHA POLLITT

THE COUNTRY BETWEEN US. *By Carolyn Forché. Harper & Row. 59 pp. $11.50.*

Why is so little good political poetry written in America today? The very phrase "political poetry" conjures up visions of smudgy sectarian newspapers where verses with titles like "Death to All Fascists" appear next to letters signed "A Brother in Detroit." And yet, it wasn't so long ago that poets wrote about the major issues of the day as a matter of course. Subjects like Italian (or Greek or Polish) independence, slavery and the plight of the industrial poor were as much a staple of nineteenth-century verse as were the deaths of beautiful girls. Our own century offers Pound, Auden and his circle, and Lowell. Among poets working now, however, only a few treat the sorts of events and issues one reads about in the newspapers or demonstrates about in the streets, and I think it's significant that those who do—Bly, Levertov, Rich, Ginsburg—are middle-aged. For most young poets, I suspect, the prospect that a poem might address the election of Ronald Reagan, the arms race or the organizing of office workers must seem both comical and insulting. Many would quarrel with the whole notion of thinking of poems in terms of what they are "about."

The problem is not that poets are apolitical. It's that they have inherited a literary form so diminished and so privatized that many things lie outside its purview. If the prototypical magazine poem of 1910 was a sonnet to Eleonora Duse adorned with allusions to nightingales, Greek gods and the poet's fainting heart, ours is a free-verse elegy on the isolation of the self, set on a campus in the Middle West and decorated with references to snow, light, angels and the poet's nostalgia for his childhood. Ours is a poetry, in other words, of wistful longings, of failed connections, of inevitable personal loss, expressed in a set of poetic strategies that suit such themes —a lax syntax and simplified vocabulary that disclaim intellectual pretension, and ethereal, numinous images that testify to the poet's sensibility. There is little place in this sort of poetry for politics, for whatever its repercussions in the realm of private feeling, politics is fundamentally a public affair.

Carolyn Forché's second book of poems is interesting both because Forché is a talented poet—her first book, *Gathering the Tribes*, was a Yale Younger Poets selection—and because it tackles the political subject matter I am arguing is so uncongenial to young poets. The first section, dedicated to the memory of Oscar Romero, the murdered archbishop of San Salvador, is set in El Salvador, where Forché lived for two years and worked as a journalist. Other poems are addressed to old friends from the working-class Detroit neighborhood of Forché's childhood: one has become a steelworker haunted by memories of Vietnam; another, with whom Forché had shared adolescent dreams of travel and romance, lives with her husband and kids in a trailer. Elsewhere in the poems we meet a jailed Czech dissident, the wife of a "disappeared" Argentine and Terrence Des Pres, author of *The Survivor*, a study of the death camps. This is strong stuff, and the excited response *The Country Between Us* has already provoked shows, I think, how eager people are for poetry that acknowledges the grim political realities of our time.

At their best, Forché's poems have the immediacy of war correspondence, postcards from the volcano of twentieth-century barbarism:

> A boy soldier in the bone-hot sun
> works his knife
> to peel the face from a dead man
>
> and hang it from the branch of a tree
> flowering with such faces.
> ("Because One is Always Forgotten")

> a labor leader was cut to pieces and buried.
> Tell them how his friends found
> the soldiers and made them dig up
> and ask forgiveness of the corpse, once
> it was assembled on the ground
> like a man.
> ("Return")

Testicles are "crushed like eggs," rats are introduced into vaginas, José waves his bloody stumps in the air, Lil Milagro is raped and forced to defecate in public. "There is nothing one man will not do to another," Forché tells us. So shocking are the incidents reported here—so automatic is our horror at a mere list of places where atrocities have occurred ("Belsen, Dachau, Saigon, Phnom Penh")—that one feels almost guilty discussing these poems as poems, as though by doing so one were saying that style and tone and diction mattered more than bloody stumps and murdered peasants and the Holocaust.

This unease, though, should not have arisen in the first place, and it points to an underlying problem: the incongruity between Forché's themes and her poetic strategies. Forché's topics could not be more urgent, more extreme or more public, and at least one of her stated intentions is to make us look at them squarely. And yet, she uses a language designed for quite other purposes, the misty "poetic" language of the isolated, private self. She gives us bloody stumps, but she also gives us snow, light and angels. You have to read "The Island" several times, for instance, to get past the exotic tropical scenery, the white dresses, the "seven different shawls of wind," the mist that is like bread and so forth, and realize that this is a poem of homage to Claribel Alegrias, a heroic woman whom Forché would like to resemble, and that Claribel is telling Forché not to give up hope for El Salvador. At least, I think that's what it's about.

In other poems, a man manufactures bullets in "the spray of stars that is/a steel mill"; a political prisoner sees people as "those cold/globes of breath that shape/themselves into bodies"; the coffin of a Salvadoran martyr is seen "rocking into the ground like a boat or a cradle." The trouble is, if her images are to bear the burdens Forché places on them and move us in the way she wants, a steel mill can't be a lovely play of light, or bodies dreamlike apparitions, or death either a calm voyage or the sleep of a baby. They have to be real.

When Forché speaks plainly, she can be very good indeed. "The Expatriate" is a clever satire on a young American left-wing poet whose idea of solidarity with the Third World is to move to Turkey and sleep with women who

Katha Pollitt is a poet and the author of Antarctic Traveller *(Knopf).*

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speak no English. "It would be good if you could wind up/in prison and so write your prison poems," says Forché ironically, and we know she's got his number:

> You have been in Turkey a year
> now.
> What have you found? Your letters
> describe the boring ritual of tea,
> the pittance you are paid to teach
> English, the bribery required for so
> much
> as a postage stamp. Twenty-year-old
> poet,
> Hikmet did not ask to be Hikmet.

Equally memorable is "The Colonel," an account of dinner at the home of a right-wing Salvadoran officer, who, after the wine and the rack of lamb, dumps his collection of human ears on the table: "Something for your poetry, no?" The precise, observed details—the bored daughter filing her nails, the American cop show on TV, the parrot in the corner and the gold bell for the maid—work together to make a single impression, and the colonel himself, with his unpredictable swings between domestic boredom and jaunty brutality, is a vivid character, as Claribel Alegrias is not. Interestingly, in view of what I've been saying about Forché's poetics, "The Colonel" is written in prose.

Perhaps what I miss in this collection is simply verbal energy. The poems, especially the longer ones, do tend to blur in the mind. Forché insists more than once on the transforming power of what she has seen, on the gulf it has created between herself and those who have seen less and dared less:

> And when I speak with American
> men
> there is some absence of recognition:
> their constant Scotch and fine white
> hands, many hours of business,
> penises
> hardened by motor inns and a faint
> resemblance to their wives. I cannot
> keep going.
>
> ("The Return")

But how can we grasp the power of this transforming vision when it is expressed in lackluster assertions ("I cannot keep going") and facile caricatures of "American men" as adulterous Babbitts?

Whether or not one admires Forché for stressing the intensity of her responses to the sufferings of others—many readers, I should point out, do not share my discomfort with this emphasis—the intensity is vitiated by the inadequate means by which it is conveyed. It is embarrassing to read that

Eugene McCarthy gets his Irish up.

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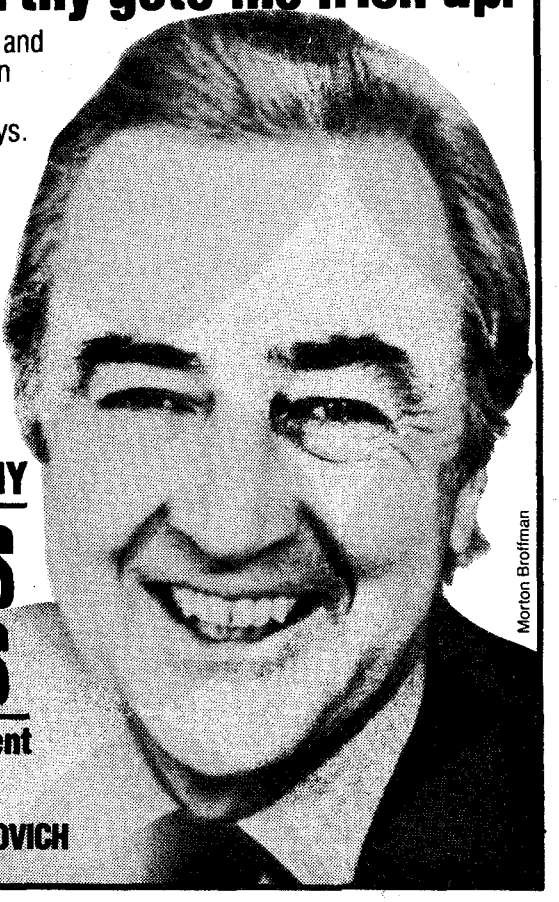

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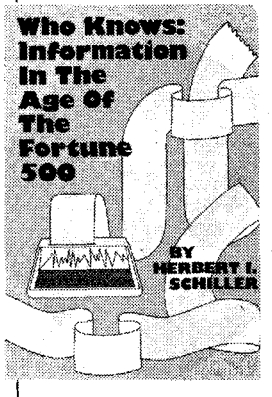

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Forché goes "mad, for example,/in the Safeway, at the many heads/of lettuce, papayas and sugar, pineapples/and coffee, especially the coffee." It trivializes torture to present it in terms of lunch:

> The *paella* comes, a bed of rice
> and *camarones*, fingers and shells,
> the lips of those whose lips
> have been removed, mussels
> the soft blue of a leg socket.
> ("In Memory of Elena")

It is wildly histrionic—and slanderous, too—to accuse politically moderate human-rights activists of deriving masturbatory pleasure from torture reports:

> they cup their own parts
> with their bedsheets and move
> themselves
> slowly, imagining bracelets
> affixing
> their wrists to a wall
> ("The Return")

Does Forché think we read her poems as pornography?

It is not enough—this too may be a minority opinion—to dedicate one's poetry to the defeat of the torturers, to swear that

> I will live
> and living cry out until my voice is
> gone
> to its hollow of earth, where with our
> hands and by the lives we have
> chosen
> we will dig deep into our deaths.
> ("Message")

The boldness of the promise is undermined by the commonplace rhetoric ("hollow of earth" for "grave") and woolly syntax (the hands and lives dig into our deaths *after* the voice is dead?).

On the other hand, to make such a promise is not nothing, either. If poetry is to be more than a genteel and minor art form, it needs to encompass the material Forché presents. Much credit, then, belongs to Forché for her brave and impassioned attempt to make a place in her poems for starving children and bullet factories, for torturers and victims, for Margarita with her plastique bombs and José with his bloody stumps. What she needs now is language and imagery equal to her subjects and her convictions. The mists and angels of contemporary magazine verse are beneath her: she *has* seen too much, she has too much to say. Of how many poets today, I wonder, could that be said? □

Virginia Woolf's Centenary

CALVIN BEDIENT

In her essay "How It Strikes a Contemporary," an essay characteristically graceful, live, penetrating, darting, Virginia Woolf asked, "Can we go to posterity with a sheaf of loose pages?" for that is all, she thought, her age could offer—a few stanzas, a chapter here and there, the beginning of this novel, the end of that. "It is an age," she said, "of fragments." "If we ask for masterpieces," she continued, "where are we to look?" A few poems by Yeats and, she added unfortunately, by de la Mare and, still more unhappily, by Davies—the William Henry Davies who is now cupboarded in footnotes in literary histories. "Mr. Lawrence," she said somewhat wickedly, "of course has moments of greatness, but hours of something very different." As for *Ulysses*, it was "a memorable catastrophe—immense in daring, terrific in disaster." Yes, she concluded, "an age incapable of sustained effort."

How astonishing all this is today. For what is remarkable to us as we look back on the great writers of her time—on Yeats and Lawrence, on Joyce and T. S. Eliot, and not least on Woolf herself—is the pitch of genius at which they wrote, the sustained flights of whole works and, indeed, of entire careers. The age awes us by its creative energy and ferment, by pyrotechnics that were, for all their dazzle, in the service of serious new visions of life.

The reason for this fermentation was suggested by Woolf when she noted how sharply she and her contemporaries were cut off from their predecessors. The war, the sudden slip of masses held in position for ages, has alienated us, she said, "from the past and made us perhaps too vividly conscious of the present. Every day we find ourselves doing, saying, or thinking things that would have been impossible to our fathers. . . . New books lure us to read them partly in the hope that they will reflect this re-arrangement of our attitudes." The writers sought—by varying the old methods and attacks—to come upon this rearrangement clean and give it back whole and comprehended. Life seemed to have outrun apprehension, and they had a great job of work to do—not unexhilarating—to help bring humanity abreast of it again.

What remained possible for them, indeed what was more than ever intoxicating, is something that has all but disappeared from British fiction and poetry today—the belief that life daily, in Woolf's words, "suggests more than the most voluble can suggest," that it is "always and inevitably much richer than those who try to express it," that it has not yet been completely sounded, mapped. Yeats felt it, Lawrence too, and Woolf; even Eliot, if never one to feel ignited by life, praised the mystery with which it intersected. What is at the bottom of much current literature is, by contrast, a sense of inescapable banality, including the banality of evil. The writers already know more of life than they care to know, and cringe. For Angus Wilson, Beryl Bainbridge, William Trevor, Margaret Drabble and still others, the day does not start up ahead of them, beckoning; it is rather what they take their morale in their hands to get through.

Not that it was bliss to be alive in Woolf's time. She protested the idea, noting that "for our generation the mind is full of monstrous . . . unmanageable emotions." For instance, one is confronted with the fact "that life is infinitely beautiful yet repulsive; that one's fellow creatures are adorable but disgusting; . . . that all bonds of union seem broken, yet some control must exist." For Woolf, even more than for E. M. Forster, the balance among such contrasts and collisions was precarious. Life took courage—though once, to be sure, she jotted in her diary: "It occurs to me that this state, my depressed state, is the state in which most people usually are." But the sense of contrast and collision generated a high literature, and Woolf's last novel, *Between the Acts*, and Forster's last novel, *A Passage to India*, were achievements of a new negative capability, one poised, somehow, in the midst of the monstrous and the unmanageable. There has been perhaps one recent British masterpiece of the kind, Geoffrey Hill's volume of prose poems, *Mercian Hymns*, published in 1971. Otherwise, the faith that distinguished the High Moderns is largely

Calvin Bedient is the author of Eight Contemporary Poets *(Oxford) and is currently writing a book on the poetry of Robert Penn Warren.*

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gone, the belief that literature—and even the great cathedral of *Ulysses* conforms to this, founded though it was on the incertitude of the void—can never do more than adumbrate the immensity of life and set its gleam on the dark waters at the edge of the known.

With one or two honorable exceptions and one brilliant one, namely D. M. Thomas of *The White Hotel*, British novelists today are the type that Woolf, in her essay "The Phases of Fiction," called the truth-tellers. The perfunctory fact-recording, the lack of metaphor, the plainness of language of a Trollope are once again dominant, as, essentially exhausted, or at best contracting like burned skin, the contemporary novel proves less modern than *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* or *The Waves* or *Women in Love*. Plot has been restored, but in the absence of the old aspiration to a central and gigantic utterance, to weaving a verbal net to trawl the whole of reality, the plots often lack pull, and certainly the novels lack poetry.

Woolf traversed the whole distance from truth-telling and plot, as in *Night and Day*, to the fantasy of *Orlando*, with the balance of psychology and poetry in between, as in her best works, *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*. In *The Waves* the poetry overbalanced the psychology and completely dissolved plot, but how fail to honor so noble an expèriment? In the presence of mere truth-telling, Woolf said, a desire for distance, for music, for shadow, for space, takes hold of us. Frail and vulnerable, with a fear of sexuality, witty and socially adept but terrified in certain hours by the black fin that she felt razoring the outlying waters of her mind, she was that paradox, a prose writer with the soul of a poet. She could not write poetry, she loved prose, she was one of the British masters of it; it was limber and vigorous and often very beautiful in her hands, perhaps especially in her letters, diaries and essays. Yet in her fiction she wanted to give prose the magic of essence and outline, while letting us glimpse, flitting in its fluidity and limpidity, the multiple darts of the mind and details of the always surprising world. She wanted to pass from psychology and social interaction straight to poetry, hence to general, impersonal truth, without leaving anything, usually not even facts, or not all of them, behind. "The thing," as she said, "is to be venturous, bold, to take every possible fence." Her genius was syncretic; she was one of those writers who, in her own words, "refuse to go in with the herd. They stand obstinately across the boundary lines."

Above all she sought, by entering the stream of this or that character's impressions, to come upon those moments of pure being when, spreading and deepening, time forms around us like a trembling drop in which all happiness has collected, before dispersing again into ordinary existence, into what lives us instead of what is lived. For her these transpersonal moments were all that remained of the romantic inheritance. Her harsh, Heraclitean sense of the discord and torrent and amorphousness of reality—to which the section "Time Passes" in *To the Lighthouse* is her dark hymn—this sense, remorseless and almost relentless as it was, prevented her, to the last, from saying the sort of "Yes" to life that, from the mouth of the much simpler and hardier Molly Bloom, closes with a note of triumph the novel Woolf found so disastrous. She was spirited, she was brave, but her beautiful refined mind at times grew tense and brittle, and then broke. Again, she never underestimated the monstrousness of life, and her suicide, when she walked into the river near her home, stilling the voices that had taken over her head, was in part a defeat of the delicate person she was. But it was also gallant; it was intended to spare her husband, Leonard, the burden of her darkened mind. Yet gallantry and caretaking and the taking of pains, whether those of a husband or wife or a writer or painter or housekeeper, were qualities she never

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Isabelle Pinzler, director, ACLU Women's Rights Project, "Women and Freedom."
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Panel III 3:30: *Arms & Rights: Why More Arms Buys Less Security.*
Gordon Adams, Council on Economic Priorities, *Moderator.*
Rep. Tom Downey, "Bigger Isn't Better."
Ramsey Clark, former U.S. Attorney General, "The Right Is Wrong on Human Rights."
Professor Robert J. Lifton, Yale Medical School, "Beyond Nuclear Illusions: A Call to Awareness."

Panel IV 4:30: *An Empowerment Agenda: Organizing Citizens To Talk Back*
Stephen Gillers, NYU law professor, *Moderator.*
Don Ross, head, NYPIRG, "Organizing For a Change."
Lois Gibbs, Love Canal Homeowners Association, "How to Fight Government—and Win."
Concluding Remarks: **Ralph Nader**, *The Future, Next.*

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failed to celebrate in her fiction; they form her legacy of humanism, the gist of her radiant poetry. If she amply acknowledged the brute accident that as living beings we are up against, she also celebrated the constructive bustle, the possible music, of the affectionate human will. □

Nuclear Power Brokers

JESSICA MITFORD

THE NUCLEAR BARONS. *By Peter Pringle and James Spigelman. Holt, Rinehart & Winston. 446 pp. $16.95.*

The authors of this weighty tome have made a valiant effort to put between two covers the whole forty-year story of nuclear energy, worldwide, in war and peace. To a large extent they have succeeded. For the general reader, *The Nuclear Barons* is an excellent overview; for those who want to probe deeper, a valuable research tool with meticulous notes and bibliography. A felicitous collaboration. As we learn from the book jacket, Peter Pringle is a member of the renowned London *Sunday Times* Insight Team; James Spigelman, as senior adviser to Prime Minister Gough Whitlam of Australia, was involved in high-level discussions of nuclear policy.

The title may be somewhat misleading, suggesting visions of potbellied, leering munitions profiteers à la George Bernard Shaw. True, we read of billions of dollars—and rubles, pounds, marks, francs, rupees—flung around by governments, private companies and public utilities, but we don't discover who the individual financial beneficiaries are. The "barons" of the title are in fact physicists, engineers, members of governmental atomic and nuclear commissions. "Nuclear baronets" is more like it.

While the authors discuss in detail the early testing of the hydrogen bomb and its hideous consequences for local inhabitants—information which was suppressed for decades by the U.S. government—they are at their best describing the nuts and bolts of nuclear expansion from weaponry to the production of electric power: the extravagant hopes once held out for this source of energy, the Machiavellian attempts to suppress data pointing to its dangers.

By the early 1950s, nuclear weapons were getting bad press. Scientists warned they could lead to the annihilation of the human race. In 1953, seeking to reassure the public, President Eisenhower made his celebrated "Atoms for Peace" speech. (That foxy old father figure cautioned Gordon Dean, chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission: "Leave 'thermonuclear' out of the press releases. Keep the public confused about fission and fusion.")

Atoms for Peace promised clean, safe, cheap energy for the millions—nothing short of a new life of plenty for the world's underprivileged. Now, almost thirty years later, nuclear energy has proved to be dirty, dangerous and disastrously expensive, as Pringle and Spigelman so ably demonstrate. Their chilling account of the cost to India of its failed nuclear effort is alone worth the price of the book.

The authors make their points with stunning effect by quoting from government documents. The transcript of taped conversations between members of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, who were desperately seeking information about the Three Mile Island accident forty-eight hours after it happened, reads like the last recorded words of a pilot whose plane is about to crash. Here is an exchange between Harold Denton, the N.R.C.'s nuclear reactor regulation director, and N.R.C. Chairman Joseph Hendrie:

> Denton: ". . . I sure wish I had better data."
>
> Hendrie: ". . . Yes, your current link out to the site is just not operating or what is the situation? Who are you talking to out there. . . ?
>
> Denton: "I'm not sure. Let me ask. . . ."
>
> Hendrie: ". . . I think we had better get—Harold, see if you can get some sort of a better link established. . . . We are operating almost totally in the blind, his information is ambiguous, mine is nonexistent and—I don't know, it's like a couple of blind men staggering around making decisions."

In a book of this ambitious scope there are bound to be sins of omission. For example, the early protest movement against nuclear bombs is scantily

Jessica Mitford's books include The American Way of Death, Poison Penmanship *and* Daughters and Rebels.

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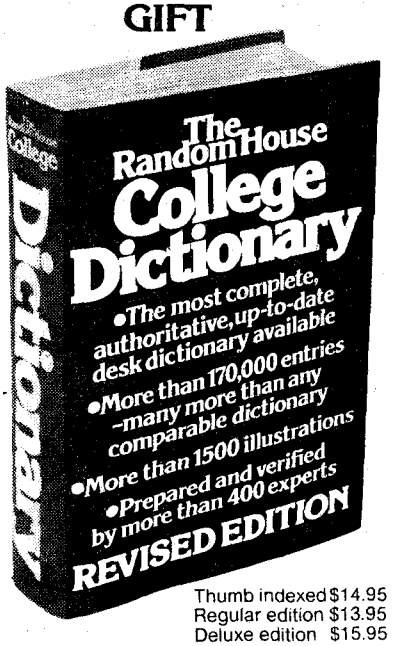
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covered. The authors don't mention England's Aldermaston marches of the 1950s, in which hundreds of thousands of Londoners made an arduous fifty-mile trek to register their opposition. Nor do they note the extraordinary response in the United States to the Stockholm Peace Pledge at the height of the Korean War, when more than a million signatures were gathered—and this despite the fact that in the view of the various witch-hunting Congressional committees, circulating the petition was tantamount to subversion.

And sins of commission: while some of the thumbnail sketches of nuclear bigwigs are of interest, one eventually tires of "tall, thin, blond," "silver hair, cold blue eyes," "thin-lipped and square-jawed," as obligatory journalistic human-interest touches. Coming across the name of Michel Hug, a French nuclear empire-builder, I braced myself for his mini-biog: Son of a humble fisherman? A rich intellectual? A primary school teacher? The last, it turns out. His mother "died young without ever having owned a refrigerator," which is supposed to explain Hug's excessive zeal for the nuclear cause.

Each morning's newspaper reads like an update of the Pringle/Spigelman book: Two thousand members of the Abalone Alliance arrested in an attempted blockade of Pacific Gas & Electric's Diablo Canyon nuclear plant. . . . Five thousand local residents not connected with the group demonstrate, fearing for their safety. . . . Diablo plant shut down indefinitely because of what an N.R.C. official called "a fairly significant engineering goof-up." *Was ist das goof-up? Qu'est-ce que c'est ce goof-up?* we can hear populations around the nuclear world wondering anxiously.

There is a surprise ending to *The Nuclear Barons*. Here we have a 446-page spine-chilling litany of unrelieved wickedness, greed, ignorance, lying—a devastating indictment of nuclear advocates, who seem to have committed most of the Seven Deadly Sins (an exception being Sloth, regrettable in the circumstances). And now we come to the last page: "Even without the link to nuclear [weapons] proliferation, nuclear power carries dangers of a magnitude that we ought not to accept. . . ." All of which sums up neatly what has gone before.

BUT, the authors unaccountably conclude, "this does not mean that all nuclear power plants should be closed down and no more built: there may be no practical alternative. . . ."

How's that again? as *The New Yorker* would say.

What about the whole panoply of alternative energy sources now being explored by a younger generation of scientists? What about solar energy, for example? Pringle and Spigelman mention it glancingly. They say of Amory Lovins, a pioneering advocate of solar energy who believes that it could prove adequate to the world's needs: "His analysis struck at the heart of the case as put by the nuclear advocates: that there was no alternative." They add that Lovins and his supporters "were attacked for all the things that had characterized the nuclear community for decades. The irony passed unnoticed."

The irony of Pringel and Spigelman's conclusion did not pass this reader unnoticed. Would that they would turn their exceptional talent for intelligible exposition of difficult subjects to a cogent discussion of alternative sources of energy! I should be first in line to buy such a book by these authors. □

Cogito and *Dubito*

SVEN BIRKERTS

THE DEATH OF DESCARTES. *By David Bosworth. University of Pittsburgh Press. 182 pp. $9.95.*

David Bosworth's *The Death of Descartes* was named the winner of the first Drue Heinz Literature Prize, which is sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh Press. It was a wise and, I hope, strategic decision, for not only will the book honor the prize but it will set a precedent for publishing work marked by independence and imagination. These five stories advance boldly past the flat, discouraged fictions that have become the norm in the last decade. They are immediate, serious and charged with electricity. Reading them one feels the prick of the tattoo artist's needle and has the sensation that something indelible is being drawn.

Bosworth's stories research the springs of action, the deep psychic bases of love, trust and fear. His characters—a detective, a frightened couple, a man with a passion for stars—all move about in a tense, precarious world in which every step opens a system of possibilities and every choice inscribes more deeply the line of a personal destiny. Time and again these lines from Eliot's "Burnt Norton" come to mind:

> What might have been is an
> abstraction
> Remaining a perpetual possibility
> Only in a world of speculation.
> What might have been and what has
> been
> Point to one end, which is always
> present.

Sven Birkerts is a bookseller living in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Bosworth's work can be seen as the relentless effort to make this insight actual, in situations, in the lives of the characters, in the mind of the reader.

The two outstanding pieces in the collection are "Dice" and the title story, "The Death of Descartes." They demonstrate Bosworth's sure handling of complex, layered plots and his ability to render movements of consciousness with accuracy and conviction.

"Dice" is a cleverly braided story using simultaneous narratives and a stomach-tightening convergence of events to investigate the ramifications of the casual. In the dominant sequence, a woman's moment of "indiscretion," lightly undertaken, pulls her into a terrible warp of guilt. A whole new causal system is touched to life, with effects that no one involved can guess. Waving over the narrative like an orchestra baton is Chance. Or Fate. Or a complex unfolding destiny we cannot comprehend. Bosworth raises the question; he does not presume to answer it.

"The Death of Descartes" is the most subtly worked of the stories. It is a beautiful, philosophic inversion of the expectations of the traditional detective story. An aging, retired detective is called in for consultation on a case of suspected murder. In the process of questioning the wife of the missing man he comes face to face with a repressed mystery in his own life: was his deceased wife faithful? "Descartes" becomes a story about knowing, about the nature of evidence—hence the semi-ironic invocation of the philosopher of the *cogito* and *dubito*.

Ultimately both mysteries remain unsolved—unsolved, that is, according to traditional empirical standards. But in a

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strong, well-realized move, Bosworth advances faith as a higher form of knowing. The detective performs a difficult wager with himself and burns the potentially incriminating letters in his wife's drawer. By doing so, he solves to his satisfaction the real mystery: how does one live in a world of faulty, ambiguous evidence? His choice is to give the truth of the heart precedence over the multiple truths of the mind. He is, writes Bosworth, "always a man with the unknown before him; always alone at the end. But in spite of that, it happens; now and forever, he makes it happen; the sufferer, the survivor, he alone decides—becomes fate's accomplice, an accessory to the crime."

Bosworth's other stories, while honestly conceived and written, suffer from certain inconsistencies. "Report of the Commission" has an artfully contrived plot, but overreaches—events of John Kennedy's assassination are worked in with a slightly hysterical edge. Another, "Psalm," moves to a resolution by playing off the minutiae of perception against the stubborn actuality of death, but it fails to strike a balance because of the inequality of these two weights.

The writing itself, I must stress, is fine throughout, with strong, loaded lines and a good grasp of the textures and shifts of inner experience. Problems, where they occur, are the result of imaginative excess and ambition. As such they are forgivable, even welcome. For they remind us that Bosworth is just starting out, that growth and expansion are likely. The drive, craft and linguistic energy are all there. □

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FILMS.

ROBERT HATCH

The Chosen
The Amateur
The Road Warrior

Jeremy Paul Kagan's *The Chosen* is a deeply felt, powerfully acted, but in the end sentimental work. By that I mean that its conflicts are resolved by plot manipulations that are false to my understanding of the characters involved.

The film, based on a novel by Chaim Potok, takes place in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn during the early 1940s. It deals with the relationship between two young Jews, Danny (Robby Benson) and Reuven (Barry Miller), who become close friends despite their disparate backgrounds. Danny is the son of Rabbi Saunders (Rod Steiger), leader of a Hassidic group which he rules with rigid authority on the assumption that he has immediate access to the word of God. Danny is his heir, and Reb Saunders, fearing that the boy's extraordinary intellect may stifle his heart and soul, has raised him in "silence"—that is, father speaks to son only when they are reading the Talmud.

Reuven's father is Professor Malter (Maximilian Schell), a modern man, a teacher and journalist of Jewish affairs. Reuven is very bright, sensitive but tough-minded. At times he reminded me of Woody Allen.

Although their fathers, whom they honor, are fiercely antagonistic, Danny and Reuven become inseparable companions. Reb Saunders having tested Reuven and approved the relationship, the young man frequents the Saunders's lively house, a place much unlike the sad home he makes with his preoccupied and widowed father. Through Reuven's eyes we see the gaiety and security of Hassidic life, but also its isolation and stern code of obedience to ancient law and ritual. Reuven taxes his friend on this latter score, and Danny admits that, secretly, he is reading

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books his father would not tolerate, that he wishes he could attend a secular college and that he would like to become a psychologist. With Reuven's help, he does get parental consent to attend Hirsch College, where secular studies are offered along with the rabbinical curriculum.

The war in Europe ends, news of the concentration camps reaches Williamsburg, and Professor Malter, convinced that it is the only way to assure that such horrors never befall his people again, throws himself into creating a homeland for the Jews in Palestine. This enrages Reb Saunders, for it is written in the Talmud that only when the Messiah comes will the Jews be allowed to enter their homeland. He banishes Reuven and forbids Danny even to speak to his friend. But after some months the cause of Israel prevails at the United Nations, the state becomes a fact, no longer an issue, and the young men are permitted to resume their friendship.

In a final scene, Reb Saunders calls the pair into his study and explains his reason for having imposed the rule of silence. He declares that the strategy has succeeded (that the almost overpowering splendor of Danny's personality is eloquent proof) and that therefore his son may leave the Hassidim, cut off his beard and earlocks, enter Columbia University and become a teacher and leader in the outside world. And what of Reuven? He, we are told, has determined to become a rabbi.

That is very neat, and I am sure that for many in the audience the film will be deeply affecting, particularly since it is richly endowed with striking characters admirably portrayed. But I don't believe it. First, and despite the persuasiveness of Steiger in one of his most stirring roles, I doubt that an autocrat who until then had flown into a passion at any hint of resistance to his divinely sanctioned wisdom would abruptly turn benign and release his heir from his destined role in life. Nor do I believe that arbitrary and unprovoked punishment would produce the superlative young man Danny is shown to be. And I cannot accept that Reuven, brought up to think for himself and shown to be proud and independent, would accommodate himself to the humility of a friendship dependent on an old man's sanction. Men are not made splendid by cruelty, nor are they free one day and subservient the next. Stories that

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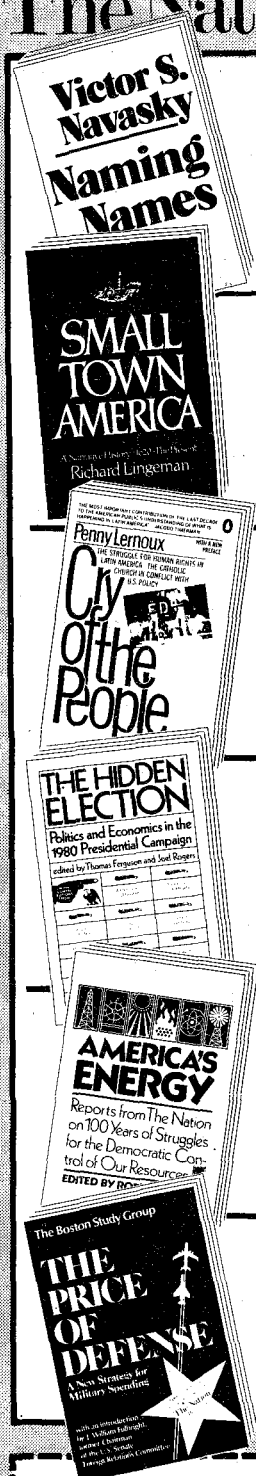
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assume the opposite are fairy tales, not insights into life.

The Amateur, from Canada, and *The Road Warrior*, from Australia, show no such inconsistencies, but neither can they be called insights into life. However, that is not required of them, since the first is a thriller and the second a fantasy, and as it happens they do cast a bleak light on the present state of our social morale. One shouldn't, perhaps, push this too far, for the films are popular amusements and do not pretend to instruct, edify or admonish their audiences. I think, though, that what the public finds amusing is an indication of its state of mind, and these two ventures are examples of the cult of violence that increasingly preoccupies the screen.

The Amateur, based on a novel by Robert Littell, was directed by Charles Jarrott, with John Savage in the title role. He plays Charles Heller, a C.I.A. computer technologist whose girlfriend has been murdered in Munich by a gang of terrorists. He demands that the agency move against the killers, and when it refuses, extracts damaging information from the computer and blackmails his superiors into sending him abroad on a mission of personal revenge.

In Czechoslovakia, Heller, now a maverick, finds himself caught between the pincers of the C.I.A. and the K.G.B. His principal antagonist in the latter agency (everyone in the C.I.A. is out to get him) is Professor Lakos (Christopher Plummer), a counterintelligence genius whose academic hobby is a loony belief in Francis Bacon's claim to Shakespeare's laurels. Since Heller is also an Elizabethan scholar in his spare time, the two exchange erudite barbs of the sort thought stylish in popular gun dramas.

The plot is ingeniously serpentine and the locales enticingly exotic: Heller disposes of one of his prey through an underwater window in a luxurious swimming pool and tracks down another in a warehouse filled with mirrors and crystal chandeliers. The overall tone of the film, with its superficial expertise about computer technology and the ciphers allegedly hidden in Shakespeare's plays, its handsome views of foreign scenes, recalls the exploits of James Bond, a hero whose indestructibility has always seemed to me as implausible as the hazards that befall him.

The C.I.A. is portrayed as even more beastly than the K.G.B., but I am a partisan of neither company and rather enjoyed the allegations of their depravity. What I dislike is being lured into admiring the metamorphosis of a quiet and reasonable young man into a ruthless, proficient killer.

The Road Warrior, a film with the most meager of plots, is an ecstasy of violence. (It was shown in the New Directors/New Films series and will open commercially in a few weeks.) Two superpowers have ended World War III, not with nuclear weapons but by exhausting the world's supply of petroleum. As a result, the human race, or at least the part of it that cavorts about in the Australian wilderness, has been reduced to a motorized savagery wherein every man will kill his brother for a can of gas. Out there in the sand and rocks, a tribe of crazies who dye their locks green and pink and bedizen themselves in ornate bandoleers and scary masks are besieging an encampment of middle-class folk who are pumping the last drops of oil from the earth. Their goal is to recover sufficient fuel to carry them 3,000 miles to a former seaside resort where, on grounds unexplained, they expect to rekindle the light of civil tranquillity. The road warrior, known as Max and played by Mel Gibson (*Gallipoli*), throws in his lot with this bunch. He is a decent chap, as one knows at once from his affection for his smart and loyal dog.

But all that is beside the point—which is single-mindedly to exploit the vicarious thrills of mayhem and wreckage. Cars, trucks, motorcycles and mongrel vehicles of all sorts are crashed, crushed, exploded and consumed in flame. Men and women are treated with equal brutality, their bodies being torn apart and flung about like rubble in a tornado. The film reels in a pandemonium of blood, smoke and voices hurling defiance or screaming in death. Director George Miller and his stuntmen are ingenious in the variations they devise for their mindless theme, but nevertheless one soon becomes numb to the excesses. Like the Feral Kid (Emil Minty), a wordless child who kills with a stainless steel boomerang, the audience laughs at each spectacular extinction of life. That is an abasement of the spirit. For all my complaints against *The Chosen*, I look back with affection on its acknowledgment of the human soul. □

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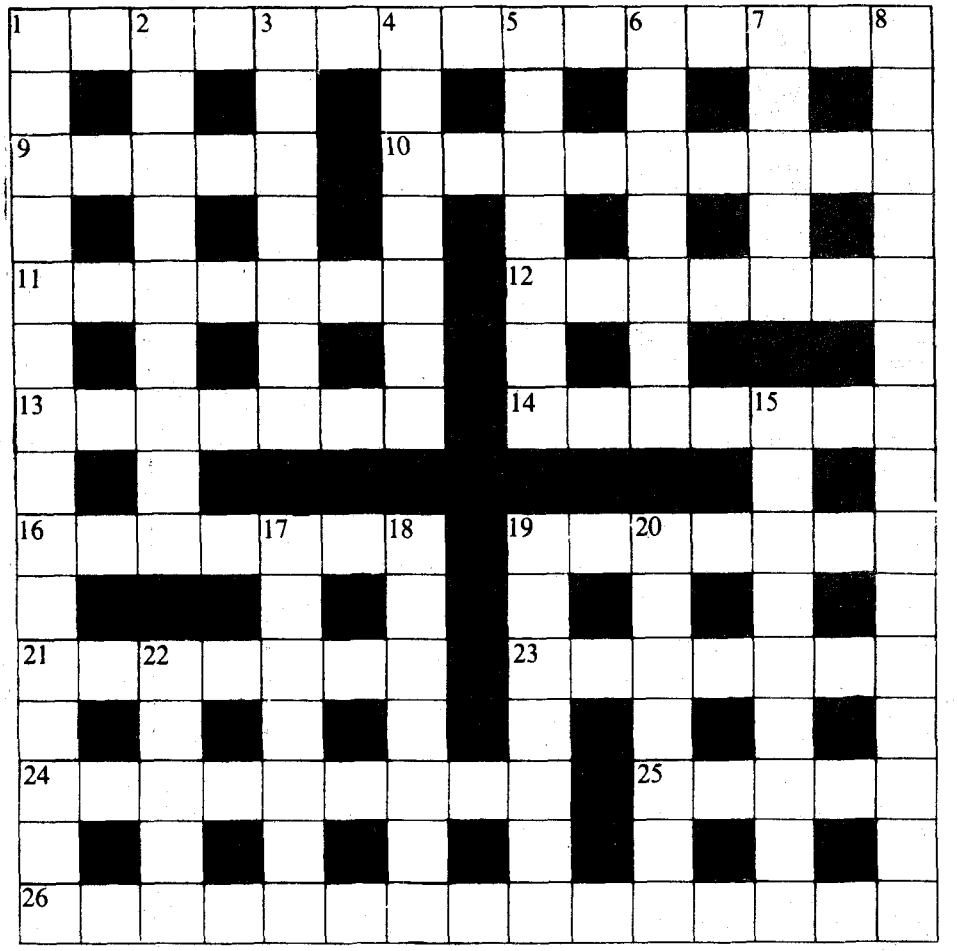

ACROSS

1 No drummer's usual appearance—gets wrecked and founders, you remember! (7,3,5)
9 Small boats made of things like cork? (Rover sounds this way.) (5)
10 The mark might be popularly eliminated. (6,3)
11 Does it involve a choice in the last course, or is it merely a tool for getting to the meat of things? (7)
12 Just this when you say you're not buying? (7)
13 Some of Mignon's remembrances of the song are somewhat different. (7)
14 In reality, the truth of the matter is in a bad Pindar product. (2,5)
16 England's sort has lost a point and just hangs about. (7)
19 Biters had better! (7)
21 Got out of scattering seed around the top covering. (7)
23 Possibly a complex drama. (7)
24 An Act of War? It helped England. (4-5)
25 A lot of monkeys, perhaps, find it's no good coming back to the end of 10. (5)
26 Bill commonly associated with the house of 13 without final direction. (7,2,6)

DOWN

1 Puckish type of bird with an excellent graduate student. (5,10)
2 Knit a warm combination for one, being a writer with a measure of depth. (4,5)
3 The French cinematic way of getting even is here to stay, evidently. (7)
4 Used in tennis and swimming, but not caused by over-activity, it is to be hoped. (7)
5 What the poor fish did when the pen leaked fluid? (7)
6 How one might tell a long story when part of the film is missing. (4,3)
7 Native to New Zealand, but found in Panama or Indonesia. (5)
8 Be a paragon, with some dishes being superior to fine illustration. (3,1,4,7)
15 It might lead to a launch, but one doesn't add up this way. (5,4)
17 A friend comes up sick with one, being tossed out of such as Etna. (7)
18 A style of pitching—more than one could be fired. (7)
19 The emphatic and reflexive form of one suggests a person's close relative to 1 down. (7)
20 The care of this, perhaps, implies one isn't scrupulously fair. (7)
22 Barge in here, despite the locks! (5)

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

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